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THE

BLIGHT OF INSUBORDINATION

THE LASCAR QUESTION

AND

RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF THE BRITISH SHIPMASTER

INCLUDING

THE MERCANTILE MARINE COMMITTEE REPORT

BY

CAPTAIN W. H. HOOD

London:

SPOTTISWOODE & CO., LTD., 54 GRACECHURCH STREET, E.C.

AND A5 EXCHANGE BUILDINGS, LIVERPOOL

1903

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TO
LORD MUSKERRY,
WHOSE ACTIVE INTEREST IN THE AFFAIRS OF
THE MERCHANT SERVICE
IS SO THOROUGHLY APPRECIATED BY THE MEN
RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS EFFICIENCY, THESE
REMARKS, BY ONE OF THEM, ARE
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

P R E F A C E.



THE remarks and other matter contained in the following pages were collected and written last year, after the appointment of the Mercantile Marine Committee by the Board of Trade to inquire into certain questions concerning the Service was announced as an accomplished fact, and intended for publication as a magazine article before the year closed.

Several circumstances conspired and prevented this being carried out.

The Report of the Mercantile Marine Committee, though published in June this year, did not reach the writer's hands until much later, owing to the exigencies of voyaging to many places. It was, however, forthwith appropriated as a fitting appendix to what we hope may be interesting to those who have a kind regard for the welfare of the Merchant Service.

W. H. H.

AT SEA,

November, 1903.

THE

BLIGHT OF INSUBORDINATION.

THE LASCAR QUESTION AND RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF THE BRITISH SHIPMASTER.

“From time to time during the growth of the Empire, questions of the Indian Government, or of the relations of the Colonies with ourselves, with each other, or with other nations have been forced on the attention of the Imperial Parliament, and it is safe to anticipate that in the future these occasions will not become more rare. It is of vital importance that when they occur, as they are bound to occur, they shall be discussed not only with sympathy, but also with knowledge.”
—*The Duke of Devonshire in “The Empire Review.”*

The above remarks appear quite opportune when the Lascar Question and all it is responsible for in its importance to the national welfare is considered and known to be agitating the minds of many of our politicians and legislators both east and west. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to try and place before such readers who are interested, and do not know already, a fair statement of the case as it is, and the reasons that have led up to the present position.

It is much to be regretted that no writers of repute, especially of those qualified to deal with it from the professional point, have ever considered this subject worthy of their pen, and thus leave it to be merely touched on the outer fringe, as it were, by one whose only qualification for presuming to offer an opinion about it is the experience acquired by being closely associated with Lascars for more than the last twelve years, inasmuch as during that time they have formed about three-fourths of the crews of the various ocean steamers he has commanded, and he has, therefore, perhaps, a better capacity to handle them than ability to write of them; still, the want of knowledge of the reason why these crews obtain so largely in the present day merchant service warrants the attempt to do the needful. The

seamen of this service—which in reality is no service at all, made up as it is of all sorts and conditions of vessels from the stately liner and subsidised armed cruiser to the merest insignificant coaster—are, as a class, notoriously averse to courting publicity, as is easily proved by the undoubted condition of *laissez faire* that has so long unfortunately obtained among them, and is amplified by their innate modesty, and too often want of opportunity of bringing themselves in evidence to press their claims for consideration with those affairs which concern them more than any other class of the community, either at home or in the King's dominions beyond the seas. There is also a probable reluctance on the part of those who could ably and sufficiently deal with the subject doing so, on the grounds of being considered anything but patriotic, and thus risk drawing upon themselves scathing criticism and vile abuse; but in the light of such treasonable matter that has lately been published and allowed to pass unchecked in a "free and unfettered" Press in England, and swallowed, too, by a section of an all too gullible public since the outbreak of the war in South Africa, one can only hope that the patriotism of those who command our merchant vessels that daily sail the seven seas, and proudly bear the red or blue ensign "far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam," will ever be deemed above suspicion, whether or not the vessels are partly manned by Lascars or with an entirely European crew, such as is now demanded by the recent action of the Federal Government of Australia, in their decision to attempt to bolster up a White Australia by withholding their mail contracts from such vessels as employ black labour!

With these preliminary remarks we will now endeavour to treat the question as it occurs to us, and as we see it in our everyday life, and not as "through a glass darkly"; and to state that we hold no brief for the Lascar, nor for any one who employs them—we merely write from the independent position of the shipmaster, and hope to do it fairly.

So recently as July 12 last year (1901), the House of Lords (quoting from the *Standard* of the 13th) was chiefly engaged

"in discussing the question of the Naval Reserves, and the manning of the mercantile marine. Lord Brassey, who introduced the subject, stated, on a comparison of the Reserves of the British and French Navies, that while our Reserves numbered in all 86,000 men the *Inscription Maritime* gave to the French Navy a muster roll of 100,000 men, of whom at least 50,000 were effective. A large permanent force he considered essential for this country, but our resources were failing, inasmuch as, if the present tendency continued unchecked, our

shipping in the oversea trade would shortly be manned mainly by foreigners, not always, perhaps, under the command of British officers. Training was the initial step in any remedial scheme. All the recommendations of the Manning Committee had been adopted except those relating to school ships, and as it was no longer possible to maintain the Reserves at the strength voted by Parliament he urged that State aid was necessary to maintain the supply of seamen. He made various suggestions as to how this might be done, and urged that the matter should be taken in hand by the Reserve Office and the Board of Trade.

“The Earl of Dudley, speaking on behalf of the Board of Trade, discussed the subject with reference to the mercantile marine, which could not, he admitted, be maintained as a reserve for the Navy in anything like the same proportion as in the days gone by. Until advantages as great as those of ordinary shore employment were offered to the working classes, he did not think that the proportion of men going to sea would be increased. As to school ships, those that existed were not fully used, and he thought it would be well to await the result of an experiment now being made by the Shipping Federation, which embraced four-fifths of the total shipping of the United Kingdom, and which had called upon all the shipowners within its body to carry at least two boys on all ships of a certain size. It was much more in the direction of private effort than by artificial means that the solution of this problem was likely to be found. Lord Goschen associated himself with what had fallen from Lord Brassey, and dwelt upon the increasing necessity of giving attention to the Reserves. The Earl of Selborne replied at great length. No effort, he said, would be spared to increase and improve the Reserves. He quoted excellent results from the Royal Naval Reserve among Newfoundland fishermen, and mentioned that the Naval Artillery Volunteer Corps, which had been disbanded, was being revived as Naval Volunteers, which it was desired to add to the reserve forces of the Navy. It was too soon, however, to make any pronouncement on the subject. As to the manning of the mercantile marine, he could not add anything to what had been said by Lord Dudley. He stated that the Admiralty had not the ships or the money to train seamen, but it was the intention to increase the Cruiser Squadron, so that it might do the work of a Training Squadron. The School of Naval Strategy at Greenwich had been a great success, and he hoped it would be the beginning of huge developments. He then proceeded to defend his ship-building policy, which was not a policy of building upon a programme spread over years, but of steady, persistent and continuous ship-building from year to year. The Earl of Dudley, speaking on behalf of the Board of Trade, said it was obviously impossible to maintain at the present time the mercantile marine as a reserve for the Navy in anything like the same proportion as in days gone by. At the present time there were 247,000 sailors in the mercantile marine, as compared with 119,000 in the Navy. Thirty years ago there were 197,000 in the mercantile marine, as compared with 48,000 in the Navy, so that it was obvious

that if all the seamen in the mercantile marine were of British nationality they would not constitute a source of supply for the wastage of a naval war to anything like a proportionate extent, as was the case in old days. If, however, it was essential to our national safety that the old proportion be maintained, it was clear that we should have to look elsewhere than to the mercantile marine for our reserves. He did not agree with the noble lord that the employment of foreign seamen in our mercantile marine necessarily constituted an appreciable danger to those ships, for the foreign seamen in our merchant vessels were drawn from so many different nationalities that, unless we were opposed to an alliance of a most inconceivable kind, it was difficult to understand how sufficient unanimity of purpose would be aroused among the crew to constitute any danger to the vessels. In fact, so little was the employment of foreigners in our mercantile marine regarded as a danger at the beginning of the last century, that in 1808, despite the pressure of the great French War, the Navigation Laws was partially suspended in order to enable three-fourths of the crews of British vessels to be composed of volunteers, instead of one-fourth. As regards the theory that a foreign captain in any English vessel was able to obtain a knowledge of our ports which would enable him to act as pilot to an enemy in case of war, it was, he thought, an extravagant contention. He would point out that the foreign captain would obtain no more information of our ports in an English ship than he did in a ship of some other nation, and come into our ports for the ordinary purposes of trade. Unless, therefore, we decided—which was of course absurd—to keep all foreign captains outside our ports altogether, it seemed to him to make no difference at all, so far as the obtaining of information went, whether these men commanded our ships or the ships of some other nation. It was undoubtedly true that, in spite of the fact that the mercantile marine employed considerably more seamen than it did thirty years ago, the total number of British seamen was less by about 5,000 than it was at that time; and although he agreed with the noble lord in deploring that fact, he did not think the conclusion which he had based upon it was true, viz., that because there had been a falling-off in British seamen during the last twenty or thirty years we were necessarily losing, as a nation, our sea-going tendency. In order to prove that, it would have to be shown that a much smaller proportion of the population went to sea now than was the case thirty years ago. We owned at the present time 51 per cent. of the gross steam tonnage of the world. In these ships 247,448 seamen were employed, and of these 36,023 were Lascars and 36,898 foreigners, leaving a balance of, in round numbers, 175,000 British seamen. If this figure was applied to a population of forty millions, in estimate in 1898, the result was obtained that 1 in 229 people became merchant seamen. But, as under one-half of our population were males, this gave the figure that 1 in every 112 of the male population became a merchant seaman. In order, however, to form a correct estimate of the sea-going tendency of the nation, the men employed in the Royal Navy must also be taken into consideration,

because there were many men who, had they not served as Royal seamen, would have gone afloat in the merchant navy. If they added the 119,000 men of which the Navy now consisted to the 175,000 British seamen of the mercantile marine, they got a total of 294,000, and this, applied to 20,000,000 of the population, gave the result that at the present time one out of every sixty-eight males went to sea, either in one service or the other. How did this compare with thirty years ago? In 1871, of the 197,000 seamen in our mercantile marine, 180,000 were Britishers and 17,000 were foreigners. This 180,000 applied to the population as it then was showed that one in eighty-five males became a seaman; but if they added the 180,000 to the 48,157 employed in the Navy they got the result, applying it to the population, that one in sixty-seven males went to sea in either one service or the other. Therefore, the comparison showed that the sea-going tendency of the nation had not decreased, and at the present day, more or less, the same proportion of male population went to sea as was the case in the past. Although the gross number of British seamen was less, it must not be forgotten that the Navy has been increased from 48,000 to 119,000 men in thirty years, and that there had also been an increase in the mercantile marine, and this would affect the extent of the supply. He did not see why the shipping industry should be outside the ordinary laws of supply and demand. The conditions of life in our service were much better than in any service in the world. As a consequence, foreigners were always glad to join our ships. The shipping industry came off badly in competition with shore employment, but that was a state of things which there was every reason to hope in course of time would cure itself. The British seaman was better off now, as regards pay and comfort, than he was twenty or thirty years ago. He was glad to say that the improvement was being maintained, and when it reached a certain point he did not think there would be any difficulty in obtaining British seamen. When the merchant service offered greater advantages, or advantages as great as the ordinary shore employment, he believed it would be able, easily and readily, to draw seamen from the working classes. Until that was done he did not think we could reasonably expect a greater proportion of men to go to sea than was the case now. With regard to school ships, there was, no doubt, much to be said in favour of the extension of training ships, but there were at present a certain number of them round our coasts, and although the training imparted on them was, on the whole, satisfactory, they were not made use of to the fullest extent. What guarantee was there that, if the number of these ships were increased, they would be filled with boys? And what guarantee was there that the boys so trained would remain in a seafaring life? In view of the difficulties it would be well to await the result of an experiment now being made by the Shipping Federation, which called upon all the shipowners within its body to carry at least two boys in all ships of a certain size. As that corporation embraced four-fifths of the total shipping of the United Kingdom, it was obvious

that, if the scheme was only to be partly successful, a very large number of boys would be trained. But even if it were only partially successful, it would be a step in the right direction, for it showed that the shipowners were alive to their responsibility. He felt that it was much more in the direction of private effort than by artificial means, such as pecuniary considerations or the re-enactment of the Navigation Laws, that the solution of this problem was likely to be found. The forces on which we had to rely were those which made for improvement and progress in the standard of comfort in all the conditions of life, and it was because he believed that that fact was now being realised by the large majority of shipowners of this country, and that the sea-going instinct of the people of this country was as great as ever, that he, personally, was not in the least apprehensive of what the future might have in store."

If it be true that the three degrees of untruthfulness are fibs, lies and statistics, then it follows assuredly that if . . . the figures quoted by the Earl of Dudley in his defence of the Board of Trade's position in the discussion of the matter—which we have been compelled to quote in full—are taken from statistics provided for the purpose, there is evidently some truth in what has been said of them; that is, if the whole of the subjects dealt with by the noble lord, for the sake of comparisons, are to be judged by the information offered regarding the number of Lascars employed—36,023 in 1898—then the criterion is not good for the specious arguments that followed. According to Lord Dudley (as already stated), in 1871, two years after the Suez Canal became a factor in the game, one person in eighty-five of our male population became a merchant seaman, and one in sixty-seven went for a life on the ocean wave either in the Royal or merchant ships. These include, of course, all ranks and ratings. At present the figures are one in 112 and one in sixty-eight respectively. The Navy League pamphlet, November, 1900, states that in 1860, 335 Lascars only were employed in the merchant service, and in the year 1897 the number of these had increased to 31,484.

It would be interesting to know the source of the information regarding these men, whose numbers are stated by the Navy League to be 31,484 in the year 1897, and by Lord Dudley in 1901 at 36,023; for in May of 1899, in an article on the subject which was published in the *Merchant Service Review*, we were able to account for upwards of 90,000 of these seamen, as gathered from the information furnished for the purpose by the shipping masters of the ports of Bombay and Calcutta in the official reports to the Government of India for that year. These reports, solicited for the purpose stated,

showed, after the manner of statistics, that upwards of 45,000 Lascars were registered at the port of Bombay alone, and as many at the port of Calcutta ; but these numbers, be it noted, represented those who were actually registered (as seamen, firemen and domestics), and not necessarily those in active employment at sea at any one particular period of that year. Quite recently the Bengal Chamber of Commerce has approached the Government of India with respect to the intention of Australia to refuse postal contracts except on condition that white labour only be employed on the mail steamers. As might be expected, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce considers that by such a stipulation infinite injury will be done to Lascar sailors and firemen, of whom 70,000 are employed in ocean-going steamers. How comes it, then, that Lord Dudley quoted the figures for these people employed last year at only 36,023 ? There is evidently a mistake in the matter, and if, as the noble lord states, the sea-going tendency of the British nation is as great as ever, and differs as little from what obtained, according to his own showing, thirty years ago, in what way have Lascars displaced British seamen, as so often asserted by Trades Unionists, *et hoc genus omne*, in British ships, when the *personnel* of the Royal ships has increased in the period under review from 48,000 to 119,000 men, except to the lasting benefit of the latter, and the Empire, too ? On the face of it all it is clear that Great Britain would have to increase very considerably the sea-going tendencies of those who should fill up the ranks of the seamen and firemen classes, so as to have Britishers only to man the many ships in the two services. One in fifty-five of the male population of the British Islands would not be sufficient for the purpose, even as it stands now, to say nothing of providing for an increase of vessels of either kind.* When the last Manning Committee had concluded its labours and the inevitable Blue-Book appeared, the *Shipping Gazette*, London, on Monday, August 24, 1896, stated in an article :

“The harmless, necessary Lascar seems to have emerged from the Manning Committee’s inquiry with great credit. Attempts made to prove that he is a poor sailor, that he lacks courage, and that he is altogether an inefficient substitute for a European seaman met with unqualified failure, and the worst that the majority report suggests is that in some way or other these swarthy sailors are affected by the fall in the value of the rupee. It is really necessary to draw the line somewhere, and though Sir Edward Reed and his colleagues may be thoroughly competent to report on the currency question it is not

* July, 1903. The Mercantile Marine Report, just issued, gives the numbers, including fishermen, as one in thirty-six.

incumbent upon us to follow them into all the intricacies of this maddening problem. We prefer rather to look at the evidence, and see what experienced witnesses had to say about these dusky subjects of the Queen. There was Captain Chandler, for example, who, with twenty-four years' experience at sea, declared that in the eastern trade he would rather have twelve Lascars than eight European sailors. Then there was Captain Hood, who prefers Lascars decidedly, because they are always attentive, and never give trouble. Take them all through, they are, he says, very good sailors. Mr. Almond, nautical inspector of the P. and O. Company, stated that the vessels of that Corporation are better worked, are kept in better order, and are generally more efficient with mixed crews. Lascars, he explains, are not carried for economy, but because they are as efficient as Europeans, and are even more so as firemen in hot weather. They stick to the same ship year after year, it appears, and there have been instances where grandfather, father, and son have all been employed on the same vessel. Captain Castle, the well-known nautical assessor, with ten years' experience in the P. and O., described Lascars as excellent seamen, and added that he had been in two severe hurricanes with Lascar crews and had never found men behave better. This quite confirmed the previous statement of Mr. Almond, who said that under no circumstances of wind or weather had he found Lascar crews to fail him. So much for the oft-repeated suggestion of cowardice. Mr. W. J. Chambers, deputy-chairman of the Liverpool Shipowners' Association, declared that the engineer of one of his steamers had affirmed that he would not go to sea with a white crew for any money if he could get Lascars. Captain Cosens, a nautical assessor, who significantly said that if he had a Lascar crew he would always know where to find them in port, whereas with a European crew he would have to go round the corner, was pressed by some members of the Committee as to why Europeans are usually employed at the helm and on the lookout on ships manned by Lascars. His answer was that this was done largely for the protection of the owners in courts of law, and he recalled a little joke of the late Sir Charles Butt, who, when told that a native was engaged in a certain capacity on board ship, observed: "We know nothing of natives here, except oysters." All the same, the evidence before the Manning Committee went to show that Lascars—a term, by the way, of very wide application—make capital steersmen, satisfactory look-outs, and capable leadsmen. An outcry against these seamen having been instituted for trade union purposes, it was but natural, perhaps, that an attempt should be made to extract some damaging information concerning them. One suggestion on the part of the Committee was that Lascars, by sticking to their ships, commit the offence of shutting out a great deal of shore labour in British ports. The answer to this was an emphatic 'No.' Then it was hinted that Lascars are given to drink. Captain Hood said he had never seen one the worse for liquor; but this was far from satisfying one member of the Committee, whose judicial mind is indicated by his retort: 'But I suppose it is possible

for these Lascars to get drunk without your seeing them at it?' Another member of the Committee was positively jubilant on Mr. Almond stating that when vessels manned with Lascars arrive in India the men go back to their native villages and then 'come back again after they have had their little spree.' 'Ah!' said the delighted member of the Committee, 'so they go on the spree, do they?' Another member of the Committee distinguished himself by asking Captain Hood how he would like a Lascar crew in the event of war. 'I should be as safe with Lascars as with any others,' was the reply. 'But,' said the cross-examiner, 'suppose you were requisitioned as an armed cruiser?' Here was a poser indeed. (It was no poser, for we are not experienced in armed cruisers—bar the *Alabama*—up till now.) On the whole nobody will take much exception to the recommendation of the Committee that Lascars should not be employed in high latitudes, though it is patent from the evidence that their inability to withstand cold climates has been grossly exaggerated. Even Sir Digby Murray stated that he had had Lascar crews under him in the sailing-ship trade between Calcutta and Boston; that he had frequently arrived at the latter port in the winter months; and that 'he had never had a smarter crew in all his life.' Surely, too, the antipathy of the Sailors' Union will be somewhat assuaged by the testimony which was offered to the effect that there is no danger of Lascars superseding British seamen, *if only because the supply is strictly limited.*" (The italics are new.)

This article, from our principal shipping paper, is quoted in full for the sake of the general summary of its opinions ✓ regarding the subject as adduced from the labours of the last Manning Committee, which sat in 1895-6. The closing remark of the article regarding the supply of Lascars is distinctly misleading, and quite opposed to truth.

Time was, no doubt, in the earlier days of the employment of this class of seafarer, such as in 1860, when according to the Navy League they numbered only 335 persons, that they came from a single village, or at least from contiguous villages, on the Western seaboard of the Indian peninsula. Those men, inherent of the sea, whose traditions and occupation had ever been linked with work on the waters, merely formed, as it were, the advance guard of the mighty hosts that have followed. The townships or villages of Bankote, Dabool, Ratnagiri and many other places along the coast send large numbers of their male population to sea at the present time. So great is the general regard for the men of some of these villages for seamen that the Royal Indian Marine almost "commandeer" the eligibles from one or two places in the district mentioned, and get all they require. Hence the erroneous idea, we presume, that the supply is strictly limited! The service of coasting steamers

to these places from Bombay has made it a very easy matter for them to go to and fro, and it is these men, as well as large numbers of Hindoo seamen from Surat, who have hitherto formed the major portion of these principally registered at the Bombay Shipping Office. Shortly after this—when the last Manning Committee had closed for evidence—we communicated with the (at that time) Shipping Master at Bombay, and inquired, among many questions, as to where “Lascars generally come from.” In his reply the Shipping Master, Mr. W. H. Walker, stated—we quote from memory—“They come from all over India; in fact, I may safely say they come from everywhere from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.”

Even that large order does not include the whole geographical area whence these seafarers are recruited, inasmuch as Burma, Ceylon, the Maldivé and Laccadive Islands all furnish large numbers of men who are engaged for sea service under the generic title of Lascar crews. Indeed, the Maldivé and Laccadive islanders are now engaged regularly in some of our Indian steamer services, and held in great esteem, too, for their work; and small wonder, when these men are almost as much at home in the water as out of it! So much for the strictly limited supply, with a population of about 150,000,000—taking the males at a half of the Indian population, though it is probably more—to draw upon in India alone, without considering the augmentation from as many other sources! The State Railways of India, with their cheap rates for the travelling native, have brought remote parts into close touch with the great seaports; it is thus easy to see how unlimited is the supply of these men who engage and obtain employment nowadays in our merchant fleets that harry the Eastern seas in all directions. Everybody who is at all familiar with the ports of Bombay and Calcutta, and obtains a Lascar crew through the ordinary medium of the shipping office, knows quite well that swarms of men from up country are always in evidence. The Punjabi fireman, once he is fairly broken in to his work, is a very fine chap for the purpose, especially when the thermometer registers close on to 160° in the working parts of the stokeholds, a temperature common enough on a Red Sea trip. Forced draught and other novelties have not made for improvement from the fireman's point of doing his business; and I believe he—the Punjabi—is easily first favourite in the far-famed P. and O. service, and is, indeed, for their fine mail steamers, specially selected. To be quite sure that there is no falling off of recruits of this class, that enterprising corporation maintain a travelling agent, whose business is to tour the districts and

enlist them for service at sea, forwarding them to Bombay, whence they are shipped at the Company's own shipping office, four new entries—rating, we presume, as coal trimmers—being allotted to each ship (of the largest class) when signing on a new crew. A few months' sea service sees them blossom into full-fledged firemen; and so the merry game goes on. The supply of new or raw material being practically unlimited for the employment of men from a special district only is not by any means the case now, except, perhaps, as regards the Royal Indian Marine, who remain faithful to and patronise only their preserves on the Western seaboard.

At Calcutta, large numbers of men from Sylhet, in Assam, chiefly engine-room ratings, are always being shipped, and in our opinion from experience are wanting in much that is desirable before they would compare favourably as a class with those from the western side of the Indian peninsula, and they simply cannot "hold a candle" to the Punjabi, who, by the way, has even ousted the Seedie boy from favouritism. Two circumstances have occurred during the last few years that have had a direct stimulating effect on the employment of Lascars. The first is the outbreak of the plague, the second is the exploitation of the Bengal coalfields. Under the plague regulations, the compulsory examination of crews before sailing has rendered necessary a reserve of hands to fall back upon, when the weeding out process is applied by the port sanitary authorities, before the necessary Bill of Health and Port Clearance are granted. Many first voyagers—from goodness knows where—have found their first footing from the opportunities thus afforded, and once started off for a sea life they generally remain, and appear to like it too; for when they realise how well off they are in material comfort, pay, and privileges found, judged from the standpoint of their previous lot as labourers of the ordinary Indian type, the new environments are to most of them really magnificent and palatial! The second circumstance is much more general, owing to the extra labour required at Calcutta in handling the coal for shipment and the employment of particular vessels as steam colliers in its exportation from the Hooghly, and is distinctly and closely related to the first, inasmuch as all the colliers employed were manned with Lascar crews. Indeed, it would have been well nigh impossible to have carried on the work with the ordinary type of European crew, first because of the very long period many of the vessels have been engaged, and, secondly, the disastrous and deadly effects the frequent visits to the Kidderpore coal dock have always had on the European portion of the crews. This, however, is a detail of

another kind. These colliers were always turned round and loaded very quickly. Sometimes only a matter of a few hours after they arrived the vessel was again ready for sea, which thus gave a tremendous fillip to the employment of natives generally as Lascars, for, the vessels being employed coasting, coasting articles were invariably used, so the men could be engaged or discharged without having to dance attendance at the Shipping Office for every alteration of a member of the crew that occurred; consequently when sailing, if for any reasons any of the original crew were not present at the Health Officer's muster for the Bill of Health, or rejected as medically unfit, newcomers were soon obtained, no questions asked, beyond his being fit and capable of handling a coal shovel! He may be, and probably is, new to the sea. That, however, is a detail to which we would commend the attention of the Calcutta authorities, and remark, incidentally, that they manage these affairs better in Bombay. Besides these immediate and local causes, the war in South Africa and the China Expedition have also been responsible for a considerable increase in the numbers of these men, as larger crews have been required for all ships engaged on the Government work in either case. In Calcutta, the Ghaut Serang (*Anglicè* Crimp) is ever ready to supply as many as are wanted, and must needs wax fat nowadays, for we have quite recent information from the best possible authority—the Shipping Master of that port, to wit—that they have the greatest difficulty in supplying the demand, although it is quite patent that the villages on the Western seaboard of the Indian peninsula no longer enjoy their whilom monopoly. It may be somewhat difficult to arrive at the exact numbers of these men who happen to be afloat in active service at any one given time, but not at all difficult to arrive at if it were done methodically by arrangements emanating from the principal shipping offices; still, the numbers quoted by the Earl of Dudley and by the Navy League, too, we do not hesitate to state are manifestly and hopelessly wrong. A census of these people would reveal much that is interesting, inasmuch as it would show—if it were honestly carried out—how insiduously the Asiatic ocean labourer is displacing the European at his own game, for be he British, French, German, Italian, Austrian, or any other European nationality, he simply cannot compete with, endure and thrive in the same healthy manner as our Aryan brother. All give way to the Asiatic; and here, be it noted, the British shipowner has no prescriptive rights to their exclusive use, as they are quite willing and just as ready to serve afloat under any flag. The Messageries Maritimes, the

Austrian Lloyds, the Rubattino boats all employ them in large numbers, while the German "Hansa Lines" to Calcutta, in January last year we were indisputably informed, had at that time on their own account upwards of four thousand Lascars—principally engine-room, stokehold, and servant ratings—in their employ. On the Lascar's continuous discharge sheet it is quite commonly found that the particulars of service relate to a foreign ship. This is done openly, and without let or hindrance further than the captain of the foreign ship entering into a bond of a fixed amount for each person, for their proper treatment and return to the port of engagement. So we not only throw open our ports to all comers, but even provide the indispensable material for them to compete with us in the nation's staple industry! This, however, is a question for the Indian Government to decide upon, and practical politics would probably favour the larger field for the enterprising Indian seaman. Chinese, Japanese, Malays, and other exotic Asiatics figure largely in the *personnel* of our present day merchant service; with these, however, we are not as much concerned as with the natives of India, though the cause and effect of them all is of one and the same kind. The Lascar or Asiatic seaman is engaged on Lascar agreements, common to them all.

Before the Suez Canal was opened in 1869 both the P. and O. and the B. I. S. N. Companies had Eastern services of steamers partly manned by Lascar crews, for in the year 1860 they were reckoned at 335 persons only.

On the opening of the great waterway, trade routes for India were soon altered, and round the Cape for passengers to India and the Far East has been a thing of the past for many years. The Red Sea became and remains the great highway to the East. Steam and the propeller are to be held entirely responsible for the altered conditions that now prevail, and the disappearance from the Eastern seas of the Country-wallah, Buggalow, Dhow, and all other crazy country craft, may be directly charged against the eternal "jiggle of the screw," to say nothing of other tremendous strides that machinery and labour saving appliances of every kind have made in a few years, and which appear destined in the not very remote future to be the means of sweeping from the face of the waters, unless pleasure vessels, sailing craft of every kind. The science and art of shipbuilding was never better known or exploited than at present, and *time*, not *mileage*, it is now the fashion to quote when estimating intervals between places, bridged only by the world of waters, the dark blue sea!

At the annual meeting of the General Shipowners' Society in 1846 (the year in which the Free Trade in Corn Bill passed) in London, the chairman distinctly said that "by the Navigation Laws the British shipowner is compelled to employ exclusively the highest paid and most expensively fed seamen—those of native birth." The written words remain. Two years later, Mr. Wawn, M.P. for South Shields, introduced a deputation of Shipmasters, Mates, Seamen, and Shipwrights of Great Britain to the then Home Secretary. They brought a memorial to Her Majesty against the repeal of the Navigation Laws on the grounds "that by such a measure admitting the cheap foreign ship, half paid and ill-fed foreign seamen of which your memorialists have the most correct personal knowledge, it will reduce, by a competition the lowest in the world, the condition of your memorialists and their families, and strike a blow at their very existence."

The appeal to Her Majesty Queen Victoria—of blessed memory—was not successful. The Navigation Laws were repealed in June, 1849, after much opposition; and now, a little over half a century later, we are found facing the very conditions anticipated by the deputation in the memorial, and brought about in a great measure by a people who, since that time, have become subject to Great Britain; a direct consequence of the conquest or subjugation of India, and the altered conditions which now prevail at sea in steam traders to that part of the King's dominions. The immediate effect of the abolition of the Navigation Laws with which we are concerned was to open the door to the foreigner, even to the command of British ships, to wipe out compulsory apprenticeship among the seamen class, and to cancel the seamen's register ticket or certificate, for which, in later times, a loose separate certificate of discharge was substituted and furnished for every engagement, and which in itself has had an effect on the service generally to its detriment even to demoralisation, inasmuch as it became an easy matter to trade and traffic in them.

According to Mr. Charles McArthur, M.P. for the Exchange division of Liverpool, shipowners have a perfect right to free trade in labour. Nationality does not concern shipowners. "All they required was that the men who were shipped were at once cheap and efficient, and that sufficient were available." All these conditions obtain with the Lascar, and in this public utterance, voicing the opinion of shipowners, we have from Mr. McArthur at once the reason for the preference shown for this class of labour viewed from the shipowner's point. Much remains to be said and written of how shipmasters, officers and

engineers have benefited by, and appreciated, having crews amenable to ordinary discipline; of this, however, later. Sir Thomas Sutherland, chairman of the famous P. & O. Company, has distinctly stated that without Lascar crews it would be impossible to maintain their services with anything like their usual regularity and precision. We hardly need remark how obvious it was that Mr. J. H. Wilson's agitation regarding the crew spaces of the P. & O. steamers was not due to his particular solicitude for the material comfort of the Lascar, or from humanitarian motives either, but from aggressive trade unionism, pure and simple. That very interesting case which has settled once for all that the Lascar is entitled to the same amount of space for accommodation as the European seaman may be very gratifying to the vanity of the secretary of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union, as something achieved to show his usefulness to his clients, though he must know quite well that it will not help them to recover the employment they have forfeited; for it does not require much of a prophet to anticipate its effects upon the Company who contested the claim, and accepted the decision with such calm philosophy. Sir Thomas Sutherland has remarked that without Lascar crews the services could not be efficiently maintained; the little extra space required for the numbers they carry or a compensating reduction in the number is a very simple affair. Here, however, the passenger stands to lose, while the Seamen's Union does not gain, for the reduction of numbers will be made from the supernumeraries, principally punka boys, whose chief business was to dance attendance on passengers at games and sports, and whose wages were generally tips!

There is no State regulation as to how many seamen a ship shall carry. The owner alone decides this for himself, as is clearly stated in the "Instructions to Surveyors of ships appointed by the Board of Trade."

"This point cannot be too clearly understood. On the one hand it is incumbent on the shipowner to man his ship properly, and on the other it is left to any seaman to refuse to engage to serve on board a ship if he thinks that the number of hands proposed to be engaged by the owner or master to form the crew is not sufficient for the ship or service. The proper complement to form a crew, and therefore the proper amount of accommodation to be provided for the crew, are matters that must rest between, and be settled by, the owner and his servants; and with these points the legislature has not interfered, and surveyors have nothing to do."

The proper measure of a ship's crew in regard to

numbers is arrived at by considering the heaviest work the crew will be called upon to perform. In regard to what is known as the deck department, in steamer parlance, the heaviest work is now in entering and leaving port, docking or leaving dock, passing through the Canal—in Eastern steamers—and working the boats. This requires sufficient to man-handle the ropes in warping, and then the maintenance of the vessel in good order, and a proper condition of cleanliness, on which the health of the crew in a great measure depends. The question of canvas—except for awnings—may now be left entirely out of it. In the engine-room and stokehold the work is fairly constant, varying with good or bad weather and climate. Cargo is invariably worked by stevedores everywhere, contracted for, unless very small parcels, at ports of call—not the terminal ports. This eternal question of numbers for a crew, whatever it may have been in former times, is exclusively an owner's question, and very strictly preserved in our experience of eighteen years as a shipmaster. Even the question of crews, whether Lascar or European, is decided entirely by themselves at all times. A sea-going shipmaster's opinion may or may not be asked in the matter.

The Times of India (Bombay), April 14, 1899, in an article on "Lascars in British ships," refers to Sir Thomas Sutherland's letter to the *Times* (London) on the employment of these men in P. & O. steamers, and after remarking on their employment on the famous opium clippers, states :

"These Lascar-manned craft deserved all the high praise that the chairman of the P. & O. bestowed upon them. Sir Thomas Sutherland's letter at all events shows that the Lascar has worthy antecedents, and that those who stand up for him against the parliamentary attacks that are made upon him have no reason to be ashamed of their client. Precisely the same thing cannot be said of those who are anxious to take his place.

"It is an old story—quite old enough to be worth telling again—how badly the P. & O. succeeded when they endeavoured to provide exclusively European crews and firemen for the service between India and England. The results, he says, were so unsatisfactory that the efficient working of the mail service was seriously compromised. 'It was no uncommon experience to have half a crew in prison for drunkenness and disobedience to orders, and the Directors found themselves compelled, after a year's experience of English sailors and stokers in the tropics, to make the experiment of employing Lascar crews west of Suez, in order to get the work of their ships properly done.' Well nigh thirty years have passed since then; there has in the interval been a general amelioration of the morality of the working classes in England in respect to drink, and the sailor has probably

improved with the rest of them. But the supply of British seamen has greatly diminished of late, and Sir Thomas Sutherland hints that if the Lascar were driven out his place would not be taken by the Englishman. As *Fairplay*, the recognised organ of the English shipowner, says: 'The question really is one of far greater importance in India than it is here. Whether mail steamers employ Lascars, or whether they are confined to the employment of European sailors, is a matter in which perhaps the British public would take little interest, but for the Indian native population, and especially for the sea-going portion of it, the subject is one of vital importance, and it is certain that a great deal of disaffection would be created in the localities from which these men are procured if, to suit the game of trade unionists, both in and out of the Board of Trade, they were deprived of their employment and thrown back on their resources.'

"Here our shipping contemporary writes in a sense that is worthy of its name, as it also does when it says 'it certainly would be most unwise to inflict a positive and unnecessary hardship on perhaps the most deserving and industrious portion of the population' as a concession to the demands of Mr. Havelock Wilson and the Trade Unionists would obviously be."

The experience of the P. & O. Company which led to the introduction of the Lascar west of Suez has been the common experience of all the other companies whose steamers trade regularly to India. Even the famous City Line to Calcutta, whose advertisements in all the home and Indian papers always contained the remark "Crew entirely European," or words to that effect, have had to cave in and take on the native for some few years now. Of course there are still large numbers of vessels that visit the Indian ports manned by so-called European crews which more often than not include West Indian negroes, Japanese, Chinese, or Malays, which is quite plainly evident by a perusal of the *Administration Report of the Shipping Master of Bombay for the year 1899-1900, to the Acting Commissioner of Customs, Salt, Opium, Abkari, and Reporter General for External Commerce.*

This official publication clearly proves that matters up to that time had not improved for the betterment of the sailor man, and the cause of complaints of thirty years ago are still rife among us. Section 10 of this interesting document is styled "Behaviour of British Seamen," from which we quote:

"As I have said before, these men do pretty well as they like about leaving their ships, and solely for that unhappy craving for drink; and here, to show that my last year's report was no mere hyperbole, I trust

I may be forgiven, even if I quote at some length from a Blue Book, 'Reports from certain foreign and Colonial ports respecting the desertion of seamen from British ships, 1899.' Thus I find in a memorandum by Mr. J. H. Longford, H.M. Consul at Nagasaki, the following, which he assumes to be applicable only to sailing ships, but is equally applicable here, in my opinion, to steamers. The question of total abstinence is one of so controversial a nature that it can scarcely be expected that any suggestion for the removal of its enforcement on the merchant seaman would meet with unanimous approval from those who are most ready to consider his interests. But longer experience has only served to confirm my previous opinion that the issue of a daily dole of spirits to merchant seamen who cared to take it would have the best effects in the cause of temperance. At present seamen in sailing ships frequently never taste spirits or malt liquors for continuous periods of from four to six months or longer. The consequence is that on arrival in port the fullest indulgence is given to a craving intensified by long deprivation; whole outfits of clothes are exchanged for the vilest spirits either on shore or over the ship's side, and the most degrading exhibitions given of drunkenness in its worst forms."

Again :

"Recklessness, the feeling that there is no future for them, encourages them in the most abandoned dissipation; and exhibitions on shore of degrading drunkenness *in the full view of jeering natives of the lower orders* (the italics are mine), are a deep cause of humiliation to their fellow-countrymen residing on the spot."

Further on Mr. Longford writes of the sailor :

"He is more often than not a sea lawyer, with a keen sense of what privileges or rights the law gives him, but with an equally keen sense of how few and limited those rights and privileges are.

"Once committed to a sea life other openings are practically closed to him, and for better or worse he is bound to it as long as he lives. Its hardships, its rapid changes of climate, with total absence of provisions for adapting himself to these changes, renders his life comparatively short, but it is no longer a merry one. Now and then a drunken spree, a short space of liberty, lawful or unlawful—if the latter, enjoyed only as a hunted fugitive and purchased by the sacrifice of what it has taken months of hard and dangerous work to earn—are its sole bright spots, and the inevitable end is, if not an early death, too often the workhouse.

"It is a far cry from England to India, further still to Japan, so we hark back and find under our very noses such evidence as may be used from abroad being sadly but truly and constantly corroborated.

"Alan Oscar (Capt. W. B. Whall) in his new book, *School and Sea Days*,* devotes a chapter to 'The Sailor and his Ways,' and states

* Published 1901, by Thos. Bursleigh, 376 Strand, W.C.

'Sailor! the word means little now. When I first went to sea—early sixties—the sailor *was* a sailor'; there are but few left. A simple, in some ways childish, fellow, true to his shipmates, and to be relied upon in an emergency. He loved grog too much; a teetotal sailor was an anomaly. The seaman of to-day may be more steady, but he is not such a loveable man as his predecessor, for, though more sober (let us allow so much) he is in other ways changing for the worse in these democratic times. Democracy in the abstract is all very well *on shore*, but at sea *the life of all on board often depends on instant, unquestioning obedience*; a ship must be ruled conservative—the competent must govern, not the multitude. By latter-day 'grandmotherly' legislation this has been made almost impossible; Jack is too much petted and the shipmaster too much hampered. In old times the able seaman was supposed to know his work; how to hand reef and steer, though even then there were good and bad. But the incompetent had to suffer; it was no uncommon thing for the boatswain to bring a man aft on the quarter deck and report that he could not do his duty; if, on enquiry, this was found proved, the fellow was promptly disgraced to ordinary seaman, and his pay reduced in proportion. Steam has changed all that, and the seamen who remain are so scarce that we have to put up with what we can get. Every able seaman could heave the lead and get bottom in five or six fathoms with the ship going seven to eight knots: you would have to look far for a modern seaman who could do this; in consequence, a steam shipmaster has to stop his vessel if he wants a cast of the lead. . . . As I have said, the old time sailor loved his grog; it really seemed as if he would do *anything* for drink. The crew was never capable of taking the ship out of dock; we invariably employed a shore gang to navigate her as far as Gravesend and moor her there. In Calcutta it was no better. . . . Our most sober men were then—as now—the Scandinavians and Americans. Of these last we had a good sprinkling towards the end of the war, the Confederate cruisers having driven the Yankee ships from the seas. Your American seaman would drink, certainly, but he knew when he had reached his limit, and did not drink to get drunk. . . . Most of our men, however, were Britishers, and those of them who were in or past the prime of life, say forty years old and upwards, had started their sea career shortly after Waterloo, when ocean steamers did not exist; many of them had served in the Royal Navy, or the 'Merchant Service,' as the old East India Company's fleet used to be called. They were thus *sailors* in the full acceptance of the term, and differed but little from the men of Nelson's day. Scarcely a man of them but could sing a song or dance a hornpipe. As a race they are gone, never to return. . . . Jack's love of grog was often the measure of his estimate of his acquaintance. . . . But with all his faults the British sailor (in which I include the Irishman) is the only one you can rely upon in a really tight pinch. Lascars (natives of India) have been much belauded in late years. They are utterly useless in a sailing ship when a real emergency occurs. The pilots used to tell us that if one of their brigs

got caught in a cyclone, they and their leadsmen had to turn to and get the canvas off her and upper yards down, as the natives become utterly paralysed. I have witnessed the same thing myself, for in the Calcutta cyclone of 1867 native craft by the dozen came to grief across our mooring chains, and the crews were so stupified by sheer 'funk' that they made no attempt to save themselves; we actually had to lower ourselves over the side into their sinking boats, put a bowline round them, and haul them up on to our deck. During the night we thus saved some twenty of them. Scandinavians and Germans, classed by Jack under the generic term 'Dutchman,' also fail in such cases. . . . Poor Paddy makes a good sailor if well led; he wants leading, in the same way that British officers are a necessity to our native regiments in India. If you are in a really tight place at sea, an Irishman will follow you anywhere. Mind! It is of sailors I speak, not firemen. Those awful firemen! Lord, send us a new motive power, or liquid fuel, for 'tis the fireman who makes things so unpleasant in the sea life of to-day."

In the chapter on the "Hub of the Universe," Alan Oscar continues:

"I heard of a sailing ship where a second mate was wanted, and interviewed the ship's-husband, Arbecam. He cocked his eye at me and examined my papers. 'Wal, you *might* do,' he said at last, 'But you're British, ain't you?' 'Yes,' 'Wal, you see we don't work our ships as you do; we want *discipline, and get it*. I guess you are rather light of weight to boss one of our crews; we calc'late to *handle* every man in the forecassle before we get so far as Boston Light.'

"The prospect of 'handling' a Yankee crew did not appeal to me, but I would have tried my hand had there been nothing else for it. However, Arbecam sent to say he was suited and didn't want me; I have no doubt he got a rougher specimen—a 'bucko' who would have 'blood for supper.'

"It is certainly true that far better discipline is kept on board American and Nova Scotian sailing ships than in ours. There, a man has to know his work and do it or he had better be in Hades, though a good man is well treated and fed. At sea you never meet them with their sails set anyhow, but every sheet is 'home,' every sail set flat. In an easy going Britisher the sails often look as if they were merely hung out to dry, whilst the men shamble along when an order is given as if they thought there was no need to hurry. In the Yankee if they didn't *jump* at the word of command they would probably find a belaying pin hurtling about their ears. I consider, and always have done so, that Nova Scotian and Yankee masters and mates are the finest seamen afloat; yes, better, as a class, than ourselves."

The laws of discipline, as they obtain in the present day merchant service, are peculiar and difficult to define. The cult of the boot and belaying pin is not of the kind to be advocated for adoption by those on whom the incidence of maintaining

this indispensable condition of life on board ship always falls ; but the iron hand on the good right arm of authority must be there and ever ready, though it be kept concealed under cover of a thin silk glove. To control a crowd of men from goodness knows where merely by moral force and example is, perhaps, rather pretty to think of. But your sea bully is not of the kind that affects contentment under such rule ; sooner or later he exhibits himself, and then, only then, does the lack of power on the part of the shipmaster become apparent, for there is not, and has not been for years, any more discipline on board a British ship than the biggest bully she carries ever cares to submit to ; knowing well the helplessness of the shipmaster, he plays a game accordingly.

One does not need to go far for evidence to support so bald a charge ; we therefore cull from a pamphlet—as we have borrowed all round—by Captain G. C. Thomas, R.N.R., on a *Scheme both for the manning of England's Navy and the reformation of the merchant service*. The author says :

“ In introducing this scheme to the reader, I must state that I am not presumptuous enough to expect for one moment that it will ever be accepted by the Government. I am only conscious of the very great need that our Navy, Naval Reserve, and merchant service should form collectively a proper naval defence to our country, and of the urgent necessity of some sufficient reforms in the crews of our mercantile marine, in which most of my life has been spent. There I find, amongst other lamentable things, that the British sailor is gradually becoming extinct, to the advantage of the foreigner, the danger of our country and the detriment of the service, notwithstanding the admirable and indefatigable interest exhibited by Lord Brassey in the welfare and condition of that body for many years past.

“ In framing my scheme, I am aware that one or two of my suggestions are like to prove expensive to the country ; but while it is very important that all waste should be avoided, it must be remembered that a cheap Navy is not really an economical one, and it would be both expensive and disastrous if we awoke some day to find, when we looked for our Navy to protect us, that, through too great economy, we had neglected to keep it in its proper state of efficiency. Great Britain's very existence depends upon her Navy, which should not be found lacking in any point whatever, and, with all respect to my fellow-taxpayer, I can scarcely believe that he would begrudge any extra payment necessary to uphold and protect the great name, honour, and reputation of our fatherland, bought by the blood of our forefathers, and to protect our commerce and colonial possessions and dependencies, to avert the possibility of war by letting the world see we are prepared. We cannot be prepared if our first line of defence is defective, either from a lack of crews or an insufficient and improperly organised reserve.

"Some apology may be due for my scheme, in which defects may be discovered, but none for the statement of facts gained by practical experience, and while I have no wish to trespass on the feelings of anyone of my own cloth, it is necessary that the truth should be known before any scheme can be perfected for the benefit or re-organisation of the mercantile marine, and before it can become a creditable cradle for the Royal Navy or Royal Navy Reserve, which it might readily be made." Enumerating the points, the author states: "Sixth, that the mercantile marine is much in need of reform is shown by the fact that it is common for crews to come on board their ships on the day of sailing *drunk, disorderly, insubordinate, and mutinous!* Again, most men rated as A.B.'s have not the efficiency which that rating implies. Out of eighteen A.B.'s, which was my complement in the *Silvercrag* on an average, not more than four rightly deserved the name. Though a seaman may possess an A.B.'s discharge, when you get him to sea you find he knows in many cases little more than a boy, as discharges are easily obtained from others, and many men don't care whether they have them or not. It is owing to a lack of properly trained men and a lack of proper discipline that so many of our fine ships of 2,000 tons and upwards are never heard of after leaving port."

Note, quite two years after the foregoing remarks were written occurred the incident of the *Primrose Hill*, with its terrible tale to bear witness to the truth of the statement, to say nothing of the many others whose real fate and manner of loss will never be known except that they are gone for ever.

"It matters not how smart a general may be if his fighting force is composed of untrained plough-boys, and the same result applies to the master of a ship. The authorities are making the nautical examinations harder every year for masters and mates to ensure greater efficiency in the navigation of ships by them, and yet the seaman, the most important factor, is altogether lost sight of.

"How can any sane man expect ships to be managed successfully if the working power consists of an untrained, unqualified mass of the tag-rag and bob-tail of mankind! It is impossible! The worry suffered by shipmasters through ill-disciplined crews drives more into an early grave than the anxiety of the sailing and the business of the ship, and it is not at all, as generally supposed by outside people, that the master of a ship is an all-powerful individual and that the crews are to be pitied. It is altogether the other way, as the law places no power in the shipmaster's hands effective enough to cope with the difficulties which arise. If the crews of the mercantile marine were responsible to the Government for their conduct, as in the Navy, there would be greater satisfaction felt on all sides. The ridiculously low sentences awarded to mercantile 'Jack' for some of the grossest breaches of discipline imaginable tend to make his conduct worse and his position lower than ever and lead to a great extent of crime upon the high seas.

"7th.—That there is no inducement for gentlemen to send their sons to sea in a merchant ship, owing to the lack of discipline of which I speak, which is the cause of the rough state of things generally on board. This lack of discipline ruins a good boy in many cases, and only the hard-gilled ones are tempted to stick at it. Hence it is that so few gentlemen are found (except in the leading liners) in the merchant navy. And yet it is most desirable that the masters and officers of a merchant ship, as well as being practical men, should be gentlemen, and something should be done to induce young gentlemen to remain in the profession, that the necessary improvement may be effected in the near future.

"8th.—That seamen go to sea in a merchant ship ill-clad and with no proper 'rig-out' for a voyage, and when you want them off Cape Horn, or in cold weather, they are 'laid-up' under the plea of sickness, and the master has no legal power to get them out! On my last voyage as chief officer in the ship *Tenasserim*, bound to Callao, when off Cape Horn, seven men out of a crew of fourteen before the mast were laid up from this cause at one time." *Another reason for ships being lost.*

It is not necessary to follow the project of this scheme, which puts merchant seamen directly under Government control, to its conclusion—anyone interested in it could obtain a copy from the author through the medium of the Navy League—yet there are parts that we consider so important that it would be an injustice to pass them by unnoticed. After describing the detail the text continues :

"Such a measure would greatly improve discipline, and the frequent touch with the Navy would be the means of making the seamen of the merchant service such a powerful body of well trained, well disciplined fellows, that not only that result would be greatly improved, but the Navy would be so strengthened that no foreign power could ever hope to break it. Then, truly, Her Majesty's Navy might be considered our great and first line of defence. For desertion abroad a seaman should be punished with imprisonment for not less than six months, loss of his ratings, and dismissal from the Reserve if it was thought necessary to go to the latter extreme. As this would prevent him from getting another ship on the same rating, as well as deprive him of all his marks, desertion would not be indulged in to any extent abroad; and in consequence it would be seldom necessary to ship. Some will probably say that when all the merchant ships are manned there will be very few to man the Reserve Squadron with. But when we observe the numbers always hanging round our seamen's homes, and on drill in the drill ships all throughout the year, in the different seaport towns of Great Britain, it will be seen that this is not the case. Then, again, it may be contended, as Clark Russell has already said, who was himself, I believe, a mate of a ship, 'that the foreign element in our ships is in the way for the putting into effect such a scheme as this, and that we

cannot do without it.' I altogether deny that. There are plenty of British sailors to man British ships, but the good ones have been tempted away to other countries, to America (on the lakes), and in various places abroad, owing to the lack of attraction in our own ships, and, furthermore, I may safely say, it was the incoming of this very foreign element, as much as anything else, that drove our good seamen away, as they would not sail with foreigners who were left to make up the deficiency their departure had created with the unqualified men of to-day.

"We must induce our good men back again by resorting to some measure which will make it worth their while to come back, and induce good men to stay in our ships to make the unqualified class good, and to attract British youths to take up the sea as a profession, which I am bold enough to think can only be done by resorting to some such scheme as this.

"In cases where there have been a few good seamen in a ship, but most of the deficient class, I have known good men to desert at the first port, and the useless ones stay behind. The fact was, the really good sailors left in disgust owing to their being shipmates with troublesome, unqualified, discontented fellow-seamen. I say troublesome, for the trouble that happens in a merchant ship at sea is, in nine cases out of ten, owing to the useless, unqualified fellows on board. I could quote, from my unhappy experience, many painful instances of insubordination bordering on mutiny through the existence of this class of sailor, but I do not think it necessary, for the daily papers often contain accounts of insurrection on the high seas; and yet Lord Brassey and others inquire why so many of our fine ships are never heard of after leaving port.

"Many believe that the dwindling away of the old style British seaman is owing to the lack of sea-apprentices. Lord Charles Beresford stated as much in the presence of a large body of shipowners in Liverpool on July 20, 1896, and as I never heard of anyone contradicting his lordship, I may take it to be the general opinion.

"A prominent Liverpool shipowner rose in response to his lordship's speech, and urged the same view. But, in my opinion, the lack of good seamen is owing to the superabundance of the apprentice. The sea apprentice pays a premium in the majority of cases, and does not become an apprentice to learn to be a sailor (of the class *rated* as seamen) as much as to learn to be an officer, and it is with that expectation that he binds himself for four years, with nothing in the shape of pay but the premium returned by instalments; and those apprentices who do not pay a premium rarely get more than £20 for their four years. Poor boys of the class our seamen come from cannot afford to bind themselves apprentices and find their own clothes and 'rig-out' on this remuneration. No! They must start in the capacity of 'boy,' if they wish to go to sea. . . . Now, as most sailing ships are generally full of apprentices, and very few carry less than six—the *Tenasserim*, of Liverpool, 1,400 tons register, used to carry eleven—and as their crew of A.B.'s during these hard times of

low freights is always reduced according to the number of apprentices they carry, a master of a ship cannot afford to have other boys on board. In consequence there is no opportunity for a poor boy who would eventually make a good seaman to go to sea to learn the profession, and as Board of Trade examinations for masters and mates have hitherto been pretty easy, this will also account for such an enormous number of officers as exist at the present time. Thus it often happens that the British A.B. of to-day has not had an opportunity of being trained to his business, but has slipped into the merchant service as fireman, stoker, or something of the kind, at an age when he is no longer a boy, and he is shipped on board the first ship 'hard-up' for a crew by his boarding master as a full fledged A.B. To avoid trouble with the crew many shipmasters are obliged to put up with such men, and do not care to disrate them, as when this class of A.B. is in the majority on board, which is nearly always the case, it would take a pretty powerful afterguard to keep them in place or get any good out of them.

"Furthermore, the state of things as regards the shipping of crews in such foreign ports as San Francisco and New York must receive part of the blame where a shipmaster is obliged to take what is given him as A.B.'s, from the absconding thief to the cut-throat assassin.

"Foreigners would not impede the rising generation of seamen if the rising generation could only get into the service in the proper way to learn their profession, since a boy knows very little of the existence of foreigners in connection with sea life. It is the absence of the first-class A.B. of twenty years ago for which the influx of foreigners is mainly responsible; and, as I have already stated, he is in existence, though I do not think it possible to tempt him back in many cases. There is not 1 per cent. of the stevedores' men in the seaports of Australia and New Zealand who are not British seamen. I believe the Colonies hold thousands of British seamen to-day, and it is not an uncommon thing for batches of them to come down from the country and endeavour to get a berth as A.B. in a ship going to England for the purpose of going home to see their friends. Stevedores' men in Australia often go home in this way, and I have found them from experience to be better sailors than I usually get. The masters of any Colonial trading ships will bear me out in this. Furthermore, there is not a schooner on the north-west shores of America one-third of whose crew, though naturalised Americans now, were not originally British seamen, and I believe thousands of British seamen are sailing in American ships of some sort. The American lakes, I know, at one time used to be a great attraction to our seamen. The American himself does not take to the sea, and that is why American ships are mostly manned by foreigners. They become naturalised in some instances, but that does not alter their original nationality.

"It may be said that much of this has nothing to do with the vital question of manning the Navy; but as Lord Charles Beresford pointed out in Liverpool, we are in great danger by carrying the foreigner in our merchant ships. 'I am afraid that if we were to put ourselves in

the same position as these foreigners, and were to find ourselves on a foreign ship opposing our country, we should probably put the captain of that ship in irons, and bring the vessel herself over here. . . . The foreign element must, therefore, be eliminated.' Before, however, the foreigner can be put out we must have British seamen to take his place, and as we have not got them it is as well to study the reason why we have not; for as soon as we recognise the true cause of their absence and dwindling away we shall be in a proper position to suggest a remedy. I maintain that in a few years, under my scheme, we shall be able to do altogether without foreigners."

Just so! To win them back to the flag is a task quite Herculean; under the present condition of things it may be taken to be really impracticable if we accept the dictum that shipowners are quite entitled to "free trade in labour," and are "not concerned in nationality," and all that they require is "that the men who are shipped are at once cheap and efficient, and that sufficient are available." These terse and pithy remarks provide the key-note to the whole story as it reads at present.

It must always be remembered that shipowning is a distinct form of commercial enterprise, and shipowners run their ships for profit in the same sense as any other person in other ways runs a shop, to make money. Being the eminently practical man that he is, he is not easily swayed by fads or sentiments, and therefore devotes himself to his legitimate occupation without the least encouragement from the authorities under whose keen and unremitting surveillance this form of industry is carried on. Sentiment vanishes under the stress of competition, and who shall blame the shipowner or any other employer for obtaining his labour in the cheapest market when he has every right, and the law as well on his side, to do so? If there is an Imperial consideration involved in the matter, then it is for the State to apply a remedy.

Soon after the Navigation Laws were abolished and the Government saw the necessity of issuing certificates to masters and mates it was pointed out that unless the standard was kept low the supply would be restricted, and thus wages would be kept at a high figure. It was also foreseen that a combination of masters and mates was a contingency to be provided against. Nowadays every trade and profession is on trade union lines, and very properly so. What is the Federation of Shipowners, or the Shipping Federation, but a trades union? What are the various associations of barristers, civil engineers, doctors, the various army and navy clubs but trade or professional unions pure and simple? A rose by any other name, etc.

Fifty years ago the greatest opponents of high professional education were—and someone has said still are—the masters and mates. What is the result? The market at the present time is simply flooded with certificated officers, which the shipowner in his wisdom took care to provide for by his own foresight in arranging for cheap labour; for we do not hesitate to state that the shipowners have managed to play their game so well in conjunction with the Board of Trade, who have discriminated in their favour by keeping the standard of education required for the examination for certificates at the very lowest possible level consistent with any degree of competency, and by the admission of foreigners as candidates for these certificates, that the young British officer is hopelessly handicapped at the start. A shipowner can, if he cares to, man his ship entirely with certificated master mariners, and in any case can toss a man aside like an old boot if he shows any independence of spirit, and does not *kotow* enough to please them, sure, from their experience, of having an immense crowd from which to choose his successor; for such is the pitiable condition of subserviency in the merchant service where the men concerned have allowed the professional status to be lowered, their privileges abolished, their wages reduced, until it is no longer possible to make a single term with the autocrats of the offices where ships are managed. They must just take what is offered, and be thankful to their patrons that it is no worse. If their lot falls in pleasant places, and they are treated decently, not to say liberally—competition does not permit of munificence—they may bless the star of their nativity, and shake hands with themselves over their good luck, for it is not by any means the lot of all. Misfortune may overtake a careful man at sea, when chance intervenes against measures which a shipmaster will have taken in accordance with his judgment, but which do not always succeed, or commend themselves to his employers. After, perhaps, years of service he is told by someone to go, that his services are no longer required. Nor is there any formal dismissal in the matter, for there is no obligation to do so, and many a smart shipmaster has received his *congé* through the medium of the office boy, and away he goes, as it were, just *pour encourager les autres!*

In no other branch of the public services is there such damnable, pernicious treatment. The shipmaster is a public servant, licensed by the *servant of the public*, the Board of Trade. It is not right that he should be at the mercy of private malevolence without appeal, because it be not enacted that a master may demand an inquiry into his own conduct.

Who then is to blame? Be it remembered always that a ship-master is merely an instrument required in the management of a ship at sea in the same way as the seaman—of the seaman rating—is; both are employed by the shipowner for a common purpose, even though one commands the whole show while the other has to serve. Neither one or the other is taken on for the mere purpose of employing him—the cult of the shipowner is not philanthropy—but for the very excellent reason that he cannot do without him. The successful prosecution of the voyages where the ship finds employment for purely commercial purposes is the *raison d'être* of all such service.

The constitution and administration of the Local Marine Boards at the various seaports of the United Kingdom, which came about 1854, are provided for by enactment and remain quite properly under the control of the Board of Trade. The most prominent public men, the Mayor or Provost or stipendiary magistrate (if more than one the Board of Trade appoint) are *ex officio* the recognised heads of the Board, four members being nominated by the Board of Trade; six others are elected by shipowners of the port. These should become by virtue of their office the actual rulers of things nautical so far as the merchant service is concerned; their administration, however, appears to be chiefly directed to conducting the examinations for the unlimited production of masters, mates and engineers. for which a permanent staff is maintained and the examinations conducted unremittingly all the year round. What other business do they transact? What does the average shipowner do in the matter when a vacancy occurs on a Local Marine Board? * He takes good care that the right men occupy the seats on the Board, and he intimates at the same time to the Board of Trade that any proposals to raise the standard of education, in proportion to the march of education and events, for the examination of masters and mates will not be entertained, and he takes care to defeat any such project by only voting for persons for seats on the Board who are after their own heart and can be depended on to continue the policy that the men who are required shall be at once “cheap, efficient, and that sufficient are available.” Who then shall blame the shipowner when fairness demands that the man who pays the piper calls the tune? At the present time on the Local Marine Board at Liverpool there is only one name among the members of the Board elected by the shipowners who can claim any practical acquaintance with the sea; even of that one we are not sure, but give it the benefit of the doubt, while of those nominated

* *Liverpool Journal of Commerce*, September, 1890.

by the Board of Trade, one of whom we are personally acquainted with is the only one who ever commanded a ship at sea; another has certainly had sea service of a kind, and is to all intents and purposes a Labour agitator of most pronounced form and views. This for what should be the directorate of the mercantile marine of one of the chief seaports of the present time, or ever known in history!

There is no person in the world who is legislated against so much as the master of a British ship; if there is, we are not aware of who is so distinguished, but do not, by any means, envy him of the doubtful honour. For various offences against the law, as defined in the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894, he is subject in fines and penalties ranging from a matter of forty shillings to £500, to a total approximating to £10,000, besides which there are many misdemeanours, very easy to slip into, subjecting certificates to the chance of suspension, or of being cancelled altogether, with or without the option of a monetary fine.

This is the common condition in which the shipmaster prosecutes his calling and struggles to exist, always on the defensive in regard to his crew, his owners, and the Board of Trade.

Not in these days of speedy post and telegraph despatch is the shipmaster the trusted servant of his employer, as in days gone by. Accredited agents at all the ports touched at are now, and have been for many years, responsible for the business side of the question, and woe to the unfortunate who renders himself objectionable in any way to those who have the confidence of the shipowners for transacting their affairs. This may be considered advantageous to the shipmaster, but we suggest that it has created a diversion that could not exist in the good old times when the *owner had* to trust the master of his ship in every possible way. This is a mere detail, brought about by the altered conditions which now prevail, and for which we have to thank the handmaids of science, steam and electricity, with all the many changes. Rank imposes certain obligations, and has at the same time many disadvantages in the way of responsibility for whatever happens. Alan Oscar, retrospectively his life as a shipmaster, says, among other things,

“ He should also be given more power over his ship’s company, that he may be able to keep discipline. At present, underpaid; subservient to engineer superintendents; in the anomalous position of ‘*ship-master*’ without a ‘*master’s*’ power; looked upon by his manager (there are no shipowners) as a common carrier; it is only to be wondered at

that he is as good a man as he is. What cares capital for the worker? Nothing, unless forced to!"

In law, a common carrier, and in reality too, the shipmaster needs all his eyes open at once to steer clear of the many pitfalls that abound in handling cargoes or parcels of it that come under his charge, for not only has he to watch strictly that the law is not contravened in the matter, but he has also to satisfy his employers that the ship has received as much as possible, to say nothing of a little more at odd times. Always under surveillance in these matters, he is, if mindful of his reputation, bound to be careful to satisfy the different interests.

Soon after the Suez Canal was opened for traffic came the Plimsoll agitation against the wicked shipowner, who at that time (1873-74) was reputed to send his ships to sea, well knowing they were to be lost! It is not necessary that we should discuss the truth of the charges made against shipowners generally in the matter, but the period is very important in regard to what we have to write about; for some time during the course of the latter year the ship *Locksley Hall*, commanded by Captain Charles Barnes, arrived in the Thames with one of the crew in irons, that is, he had a pair of ordinary handcuffs on, the reason being, we are told, that the man was insubordinate and mutinous. When the ship was docked, the seaman was handed over to the police, and afterwards charged at the Thames police-court for the offences we have stated, all quite in the orthodox manner. A Mr. Paget was the stipendiary magistrate on the auspicious occasion, and in the end, playing up to the sentiment of the time, the man was discharged, and Captain Charles Barnes was sent instead to prison to linger in durance vile for a month! We are not certain whether hard labour was added to the sentence, but we believe we are right in stating the case and the name of the magistrate. Quite naturally an indignation meeting was held in the City by those who were interested in such flagrant injustice, and very promptly a deputation waited on Mr. B. Disraeli, who was then Prime Minister. After three days' imprisonment Captain Barnes was released, and Mr. Paget was removed from the Thames police-court. This incident was responsible for the inception of the London Shipmasters' Society, which was formed soon afterwards. A few years later, in 1890, came the agitation, brought about at the instance of the then newly formed Seamen's and Firemen's Union, engineered by the notorious J. Havelock Wilson (afterwards some time M.P. for Middlesbro') which resulted in a great strike, in course of which the agitators openly proclaimed their intention of doing as they

pleased on board ship. At all events a circular was issued, emanating from the executive, and for which Mr. J. H. Wilson must be held responsible, calling upon all of the seamen and firemen class to disobey their officers on board ship, to join the Union, and be happy for ever after! The *Seaman's Chronicle* was instituted, and it was not long before the picture story of the ca'canny policy, as published in that paper, "gave the show away." Mr. J. H. Wilson still remains a *persona grata* with the Board of Trade, though not with the electors of Middlesbro'! We have stated before that the laws of discipline as they obtain in the merchant service of the present day are peculiar, and difficult to define; we may also state they are much more difficult to put in operation with any hope of getting a fair measure of justice to support a code, absolutely necessary for the common weal and safety. Discipline, properly defined, may not be blind obedience to the will of another person for such things as are beyond reason, but at sea it is accepted as a ready, unquestioning obedience to lawful commands, as it is both contracted for and expressed on the face-page of the "Agreement and Account of Crew:"

"And the crew agree to conduct themselves in an orderly, faithful, honest and sober manner, and to be at all times diligent in their respective duties, and to be obedient to the lawful commands of the said master or of any person who shall lawfully succeed him, and of their superior officers, in everything relating to the said ship and the stores and cargo thereof, whether on board, in boats, or on shore; in consideration of which services to be duly performed the said master hereby agrees to pay to the said crew as wages the sums against their names respectively expressed, and to supply them with provisions according to the scale on the other side hereof."

We now produce the "Regulations for Maintaining Discipline," sanctioned by the Board of Trade in pursuance of S. 114 (2) of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

These regulations are distinct from, and in addition to, those contained in the Act, and are sanctioned but not universally required by law. All or any of them may be adopted by agreement between a master and his crew, and thereupon the offences specified in such of them as are so adopted will be legally punishable by the appropriate fines or punishments. These regulations, however, are not to apply to certificated officers.

These regulations are all numbered, and the numbers of such of them as are adopted must be inserted in the space left for that purpose in the agreement, page 1, and the following copy of these regulations must be made to correspond with the

question does not exceed £5, but if the superintendent is of opinion that the question is one which ought to be decided by a court of law, he may refuse to decide it. Amounts exceeding £5 *have* to be submitted to a court of law to be decided by a magistrate competent to deal with it. This, however, is merely what happens if there is any dispute about it, and in these days of Seamen's Unions, pettifoggery and red-hot coddling, everything is promptly disputed on principle; and generally successfully too!

The following are the chief statutory provisions relating to the discipline of the crew, and is the real code provided by the MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT, 1894.

Desertion
and
absence
without
leave.

“221. If a seaman lawfully engaged or an apprentice to the sea service commits any of the following offences he shall be liable to be punished summarily as follows:

“(a) If he deserts from his ship he shall be guilty of the offence of desertion and be liable to forfeit all or any part of the effects he leaves on board, and of the wages which he has earned, and also, if the desertion takes place abroad, of the wages he may earn in any other ship in which he may be employed until his next return to the United Kingdom, and to satisfy any excess of wages paid by master or owner of the ship to any substitute engaged in his place, at a higher rate of wages than the rate stipulated to be paid to him; and also, except in the United Kingdom, he shall be liable to imprisonment for any period not exceeding twelve weeks with or without hard labour;

“(b) If he neglects or refuses without reasonable cause to join his ship, or to proceed to sea in his ship, or is absent without leave at any time within twenty-four hours of the ship's sailing from a port, either at the commencement or during the progress of a voyage, or is absent at any time without leave and without sufficient reason from his ship or from his duty, he shall, if the offence does not amount to desertion or is not treated as such by the master, be guilty of the offence of absence without leave, and be liable to forfeit out of his wages a sum not exceeding two days' pay, and in addition for every twenty-four hours of absence, either a sum not exceeding six days' pay or any expenses properly incurred in hiring a substitute; and also, except in the United Kingdom, he shall be liable to imprisonment for any period not exceeding ten weeks with or without hard labour.

Convey-
ance of
deserter
on board
ship.

“222. (1) If in the United Kingdom a seaman or apprentice is guilty of the offence of desertion or of absence without leave, or otherwise absents himself from his ship without leave, the master, any mate, the owner, ship's husband, or consignee of the ship, may, with or without the assistance of the local police officers or constables, convey him on board his ship; and those

officers and constables are hereby directed to give assistance if required ;

“(2) Provided that if the seaman or apprentice so requires he shall first be taken before some court, capable of taking cognizance of the matter to be dealt with according to law ;

“(3) If it appears to the court before whom the case is brought that the seaman or apprentice has been conveyed on board or taken before the court on improper or insufficient grounds, that court may inflict on the master, mate, owner, ship’s husband, or consignee as the case may be, a fine not exceeding twenty pounds ; but the infliction of that fine shall be a bar to any action for false imprisonment in respect of the arrest.

“223. (1) If out of the United Kingdom, either at the commencement or during the progress of any voyage, a seaman or apprentice is guilty of the offence of desertion or of absence without leave, or otherwise absents himself from his ship without leave, the master, any mate, the owner, ship’s husband, or consignee, may in any place in His Majesty’s dominions out of the United Kingdom, with or without the assistance of the local police-officers or constables (and those officers and constables are hereby directed to give assistance if required) and also at any place out of His Majesty’s dominions, if and so far as the laws in force at that place will permit, arrest him without first procuring a warrant ;

Provision as to arrest and imprisonment applying out of the United Kingdom.

“(2) A person so arresting a seaman or apprentice may in any case, and shall, in case the seaman or apprentice so requires and it is practicable, convey him before some court capable of taking cognizance of the matter, to be dealt with according to law, and for that purpose may detain him in custody for a period not exceeding twenty-four hours, or such shorter time as may be necessary ; but if the seaman or apprentice does not require to be so taken before a court, or if there is no such court at or near the place, the person arresting him may at once convey him on board his ship ;

“(3) If it appear to the court before whom the case is brought that an arrest under this section has been made on improper or on insufficient grounds, the master, mate, owner, ship’s husband, or consignee that made the arrest, or caused it to be made, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding twenty pounds ; but the infliction of that fine shall be a bar to any action for false imprisonment in respect of the arrest ;

“(4) If out of the United Kingdom, a seaman or apprentice is imprisoned for having been guilty of the offence of desertion or of absence without leave, or for having committed any other breach of discipline, and during his imprisonment and before his engagement is at an end his services are required on board his ship, a justice of the peace may, on the application of the master or of the owner or his agent, notwithstanding that the period of

imprisonment is not at an end, cause the seaman or apprentice to be conveyed on board his ship for the purpose of proceeding on the voyage, or to be delivered to the master or any mate of the ship, or to the owner or his agent, to be by them so conveyed.

Power of Court to order offender to be taken on board ship.

“224. (1) Where a seaman or apprentice is brought before a court on the ground of the offence of desertion, or of absence without leave, or of otherwise absenting himself without leave, the court, if the master, or owner, or his agent so require, may (and if out of the United Kingdom in lieu of committing him to prison) cause him to be conveyed on board his ship for the purpose of proceeding on the voyage, or deliver him to the master, or any mate of the ship, or the owner, or his agent, to be by them so conveyed, and may in such case order any costs and expenses properly incurred by or on behalf of the master or owner by reason of the offence to be paid by the offender, and, if necessary, to be deducted from any wages which he has then earned, or by virtue of his then existing engagement may afterwards earn.

“(2) If in the United Kingdom a seaman or apprentice to the sea service intends to absent himself from his ship or his duty, he may give notice of his intention either to the owner or to the master of the ship, not less than forty-eight hours before the time at which he ought to be on board his ship; and in the event of that notice being given the court shall not exercise any of the powers conferred by this section for causing the offender to be conveyed on board his ship.

General offences against discipline.

“225. (1) If a seaman, lawfully engaged, or an apprentice to the sea service commits any of the following offences, in this Act referred to as offences against discipline, he shall be liable to be punished summarily as follows; that is to say:

“(a) If he quits the ship without leave after her arrival at her port of delivery and before she is placed in security, he shall be liable to forfeit out of his wages a sum not exceeding one month's pay;

“(b) If he is guilty of wilful disobedience to any lawful command, he shall be liable to imprisonment for a period not exceeding four weeks, and also, at the discretion of the court, to forfeit out of his wages a sum not exceeding two days' pay;

“(c) If he is guilty of continued wilful disobedience to lawful commands, or continued wilful neglect of duty, he shall be liable to imprisonment for a period not exceeding twelve weeks, and also, at the discretion of the court, to forfeit for every twenty-four hours' continuance of disobedience or neglect, either a sum not exceeding six days' pay, or any expenses properly incurred in hiring a substitute;

“(d) If he assaults the master, or any mate, or certificated engineer of the ship, he shall be liable to imprisonment for a period not exceeding twelve weeks;

“(e) If he combines with any of the crew to disobey lawful commands, or to neglect duty, or to impede the navigation of the ship or the progress of the voyage, he shall be liable to imprisonment for a period not exceeding twelve weeks ;

“(f) If he wilfully damages the ship, or embezzles or wilfully damages any of her stores or cargo, he shall be liable to forfeit out of his wages a sum equal to the loss thereby sustained, and also, at the discretion of the court, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding twelve weeks ;

“(g) If he is convicted of any act of smuggling, whereby loss or damage is occasioned to the master or owner of the ship, he shall be liable to pay to that master or owner a sum sufficient to reimburse the loss or damage, and the whole or a proportionate part of his wages may be retained in satisfaction or on account of that liability, without prejudice to any further remedy ;

“(2) Any imprisonment under this section may be with or without hard labour.”

Now to the dwellers in these islands who are not familiar with the conditions under which the maritime affairs of their sea-girt country are conducted, and who do not realise the importance of the immediate dependence of their beloved country on the merchant fleets, without which they would all be starving in a couple of weeks, it may seem strange, more than passing strange, that things are managed in the way they are.

We are not aware of the powers vested in Local Marine Boards or what their real and intended functions are; it is, however, quite clear by sections 244, 245, M.S.A., 1894, that the Board of Trade keep the control. As before stated, the chief feature of their usefulness appears in the unlimited production of masters, mates and engineers. There are times, too, when the Boards meet to award the hardy mariner such medals, pieces of plate, binoculars, or votes of thanks that occasionally come to this class of toilers of the deep for hard wrought services to their fellow man in times of dire distress or worse disaster. There is a time too, occasionally, when the seamy side appears, and the Boards meet to sit in judgment on a certificated offender who has not had the power, or self will, to be wise in time when “partaking of the cup that cheers,” and is thus brought to book to answer for it before the tribunal that licensed him to do his business. From the time of the abolition of the Navigation Laws until quite lately when the Shipping Federation adopted a scheme referred to by Lord Dudley in the House of Lords, on July 12, 1901, for the purpose of amending the matter, there has been no special

effort made to induce boys to enter the merchant service to train for and remain as seamen of the seaman rating class, for since the abolition of the compulsory apprenticeship system, in the period of transition from sailing vessels to steamers, most of the boys who have gone to sea as apprentices were bound under indentures and premiums, with the intention of becoming officers and masters. Of course it would not be expected that all boys who wished to go to sea could take on anything so expensive, as in large numbers of cases it was a matter of pounds, shillings and pence with the parents, who probably could ill afford to spare what it cost to provide the scantiest of outfits. Wage-earning in these cases was the immediate and principal consideration, and ready employment was easily found in the coasting vessels, where they sometimes remained, but more often going farther afield when properly broken in.

Boys thus started off at sea, given a fair average intelligence, and the most elementary education, were quite on a par for presenting themselves for examination, for the first certificate granted by the Board of Trade, with those boys who had been more expensively provided for. Four years' sea service, a good and sober character, and the possibilities of the merchant service were open as much to one as the other.

Thus there are two general sources from which the young sailors who eventually become officers are obtained, even though there are special training ships on the Thames and Mersey and the still more expensive scheme of Lord Brassey's in the sea-going ships *Hesperus* and *Harbinger*. This throwing of the service open to all comers—for the foreigner was and is on equal terms—is entirely responsible for the flooded condition of the market, where masters and mates sell their services in open competition among themselves; and is also responsible in measure accordingly for fewer seamen of the A.B. and petty officer rating. It is quite common for men with mates' and masters' certificates to have to ship before the mast, in the struggle for existence, for, once committed to a sea life, in the words of Consul Longford "other openings are practically closed to him, and for better or worse he is bound to it as long as he lives." Many would probably have had an infinitely happier time had certificates not been for them, and the best interests of discipline would thus have been spared many a painful shock, for it came to pass upwards of four years ago that my Lords of the Admiralty by an Order in Council issued to commanders of Royal Naval Reserve drill ships, that no lieut., sub-lieut. or midshipman be permitted to drill—except with special permission—whose last service in a merchant

vessel was below the rank of a mate. This is, obviously, in the best interests of that severe school of discipline, the Royal Navy, where insubordination, though not unknown, is never suffered to exist in the slightest form, but is promptly and properly dealt with, and stamped out unrelentingly. Hence the efficiency of the service, which His Majesty the King, in addressing the cadets of the *Britannia* not so very long ago, described as the finest service in the world. Periodical returns of offenders against naval discipline are published, together with the punishment inflicted, by the naval authorities, and these "black lists" are read over by the commanders of drill ships to the whole company assembled for the purpose. The moral effect of this may, or may not, show itself in time. It is positively appalling to consider the difference of methods and measures that obtain on a naval ship, compared with the general looseness of a merchant vessel. The naval officer is vested with proper power and the immediate means of enforcing discipline and inflicting punishment on those who offend against the rules of that service, whose people have been under training from the time they first joined, and who know quite well what they have to expect for any dereliction of duty. Not so in a merchant ship, where commonly enough voyages commence with a crew who are at once both insubordinate and mutinous, the only remedy against so serious a state of things being the Official Log Book and the Civil Law. A fair sample of this sort of thing is afforded in the following letter—(from *Fairplay*) a copy of which was addressed to the Board of Trade—received by the Merchant Service Guild, from Captain G. Browne, of the ss. *Brunswick*.

"J. G. Moore, Esq., Secretary, M.S.G., Liverpool.

"DEAR SIR,—As an illustration of the great necessity of some regulation for the better enforcement of discipline on board merchant vessels, and to ensure crews who have signed articles being on board at the time specified in those articles, I would beg leave to quote you my own case on leaving Liverpool on October 28, 1899. Crew signed articles to be on board at 5 a.m. on that day, but as they evidently found out that the ship would not sail that tide, they did not appear. About 5 p.m., as the ship was hauling through from Brunswick to Toxteth Dock, with engineers firing and working main engines, two firemen appeared alongside with their bags, bed, etc. One of them hailed in an impatient tone of voice, 'I say, cap'n, when are you going to sail?' I asked them what they were, and they replied, 'Firemen!' 'Why didn't you join the ship before?' queried I, fearing to offend them, to which the spokesman replied, 'Since you are so b—— particular, we don't join now; come along, Jimmy,' and off they went down the quay. I have not seen them since, and being Saturday

evening I knew I would have some trouble in getting substitutes. Now the dockmaster began to shout, 'Come along with the steamer; do you want to get out? for I am going to close the gates.' The chief officer came along and said, 'I have no one to haul in the ropes, sir.' The second officer from aft reported the same state of affairs in that quarter. The result was that the ship went into the river, sailors and firemen, those who had turned up, 'whole seas over,' not knowing what they were doing, and the ship had to bring up in the river to give them a chance to sleep off the drink, while the officers with their gold buttons and brass bands, who had been busy from 7 a.m., had to work all night to clear up the decks. Three a.m. (next morning) turned up the hands, four sailors out of six that signed on were on board, three middling fit for work, the other said, 'I'll be d—d if I turn too, I'm too tired.' So we started away, barometer falling rapidly, and every indication of a heavy gale coming on, with the firemen and sailors not at all A1. Gale increased, and we had to anchor in Moelfra Bay, and after gale moderated proceeded on our voyage to Penarth, where we were bound for bunkers. The sailor already referred to, still in his bunk, said he was too ill to work, but immediately on arrival he jumped up with alacrity, seized his bag, slung it ashore, and deserted, snapping his fingers at us, and saying he had had a good passage to a place where wages were higher. Now, sir, you can guess what state my officers were in after having been two days and three nights constantly on the go without having had their clothes off for nearly all the time, they having had to do the work of the ship, clearing decks, securing movables, getting ready for bunkering, while Jack sits down, too ill to work, poor fellow, watching him—the officer—do his work. What can one do to make them obey orders? Fine them? They have no money. Prosecute them? The magistrates invariably decide in their favour, and the master is looked upon as something inhuman and unnatural. At Penarth we had to ship new men to fill up the gaps. A man signs on, gets a half month's advance note, and he never turns up. Have to get another in his place. He doesn't turn up, and after a day of complete worry we manage to get bunkered, ready for sea and start away. At the last moment the chief engineer reports fireman who had been away without leave incapable of working, as he fell and hurt himself when on shore. Board of Trade officer wants to know what I am going to do with him. 'Send him to the hospital' he suggests, so I make out an order for his admission, and then the Board of Trade officer wants to know if I am going to pay him off, saying he has three or four days' pay due to him. Dockmaster shouts, 'Now what *are* you going to do with that steamer? Are you going out or are you going to stay in?' I tell the Board of Trade officer the man was on shore without leave, and against orders, and by the Articles he forfeits any sum not exceeding two weeks' pay. He jumps on shore as the ship is moving through the locks, and replies 'Very well, captain, you need not be surprised if you get into trouble.' At last we are outside the dock, blowing, and dirty weather from S.S.E., muster all the crew, finding them fairly,

more or less, able to stand, some of the new hands not able to speak English, but on the whole I thank God I have at last got so far from the shore as to ensure finding the crew when wanted. As a result of these few days' working, the official Log Book contains the following entries. Having, when the crew is complete, only six firemen and trimmers, six seamen, boatswain and carpenter, I think the list of charges contained therein, out of such a small number, quite sufficient to make a record. The entries are as follow :

DATE OF OCCURRENCE	PLACE	DATE OF ENTRY	
Oct. 28, 1899	Liverpool	Nov. 1, 1899	Edward Mansett, A.B., Owen Rowlands, A.B., W. Sodenberg, carpenter, Wm. Rowlinson, fireman, Pat. Crawford, trimmer, Robert Power, trimmer, failed to join and were left behind.
Oct. 28, 1899	Liverpool	Nov. 1, 1899	George Wilson, A.B., came on board drunk, and after ship left refused duty until the arrival of the ship at Penarth Dock, where he immediately deserted.
Oct. 31, 1899	Penarth	Nov. 5, 1899	I have this day engaged Bernard Colligan, fireman, Robert Suthers, trimmer, William Edwards, trimmer, W. F. Vaughan, A.B., Apostolo Loos, A.B., Mekel Tuscarora, A.B., in place of fireman and seamen failed to join and deserted.
Nov. 1, 1899	Penarth	Nov. 5, 1899	Bernard Colligan, fireman, failed to join, and John Carney was engaged as substitute.
Nov. 1, 1899	Penarth	Nov. 5, 1899	William Corley, fireman, went on shore without leave and against orders, and whilst on shore fell and hurt himself. At last moment before ship sailed said he couldn't work. He went on shore, and John McCran was engaged in his place.
Nov. 6, 1899	At Sea	Nov. 6, 1899	John McCran, who was shipped as fireman, has this day been reduced to trimmer for incompetency, and Wm. Edwards, trimmer, promoted to his place, with wages from this date.

"I am sure, sir, looking at those few facts, one is inclined to ask what is the use of existing Board of Trade regulations? Why not close all H.M. engagement offices, as the contracts therein are not worth the paper they are signed upon? What is the use of out-door Board of Trade officers with regard to any assistance a master leaving port may get from them? If the Board of Trade are willing to help the masters, why not keep a 'Black list,' and enter the names of every seaman and fireman who has failed to join without reason, and prevent him from repeating his offence? Is it not notorious that the Board of Trade officers favour seamen and firemen to the detriment of masters and officers? Is not the Merchant Shipping Act, with regard to the engagement of seamen, all a farce? I have read controversies between masters and others interested as to the

relative merits of the British seaman and the foreign seaman. My own idea is the common one, that the British sailor is the best in time of trouble at sea, but as we are not always in trouble at sea his good qualities seldom come into prominence, but his bad qualities are, more or less, always apparent. I feel inclined to give the palm to the foreigner, who, having been disciplined in his own country, is mostly amenable to laws of ours, and on the whole is just as good and in many instances a better sailor-man, as we call them, than the present day paint-washing, deck-scrubbing sea lawyer who signs on as A.B. In any case when on the point of sailing from England, a master feels inclined to cry 'Give me anyone; fill up my complement, let them be tinkers or tailors, Greeks, Turks, Chinese, anyone; only let me get to sea clear of all this Board of Trade tomfoolery.' And, really, looking back at the cool way sailors and firemen take their bags on shore after joining, and the brass-bound Board of Trade officer looking on with calm approval, the rest of the noble British sailors being on their backs in the fore-castle allowing the fumes of the best old shot whisky to escape, one does feel mighty tickled when engaging a crew at the mercantile marine office to hear the well-known passage read over by the shipping-master in a voice and with the expression of a full-blown High Church curate: 'And the said crew agree to conduct themselves in an *orderly, faithful, honest and sober manner*. To be at *all times diligent* in their respective duties, and to be *obedient* to the lawful commands of the said master, or of any person who shall lawfully succeed him, and of their superior officers, etc., etc.' On looking at the men who listen to him, one almost fancies they also are trying to smother their risibility at the idea of inserting such a useless and never-to-be-thought-of-by-them clause in the agreement, which at the best of times won't hold water. I think, sir, we, as an organised body, should never rest in our endeavours until we have secured better regulations for the enforcement of discipline on board, also with regard to the engagement of seamen, thereby ensuring to ourselves and all concerned—seamen, firemen, engineers, officers, and masters—a greater measure of security, harmony, and good service.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

GEORGE BROWNE, M.S.G.,

Master, ss. *Brunswick*."

This case is a fair sample of the discipline on board a British ship if the crew are inclined to be troublesome. The travesty of attempting to maintain discipline *at sea* under these conditions has resulted in many, many cases, and unless too serious, of shipmasters letting defaulters go scot free rather than suffer the chance of further indignity of a decision against them, as so often has happened, owing to the wasted sympathy so freely lavished on these offenders by those whose duty it is (and in which they have failed) to administer the law! We do not

hesitate to state that this deplorable condition of things is due entirely to the baneful influence of those to whom these cases have to be submitted, more particularly magistrates in the United Kingdom and the British consuls abroad. To make the punishment fit the crime is not their practice, for the ridiculous and contemptuous sentences invariably inflicted only accentuate the cases, and make the offenders more hardened and difficult to deal with than ever.

The cause being as we have stated, the consequence is clearly reflected in the enormous invasion of Lascars which predominate on the Eastern fleets ; who, contented with their lot, are amendable to ordinary discipline, such as may be left to the shipmaster to keep the upper hand and proper control of his crew and do the business for which he is paid like every other member of the ship's company. These men are not by any means angels, or even all that is desirable, as they, too, have their faults ; but on the whole they do not exhibit any tendency to want to do as they please, but just do their work as they should, and attend to their duty decently and in accordance with the terms of their agreement. The times have changed the conditions and requirements of those who follow the sea, and where the screw propeller drives the ocean plough the sailor-man—as we of the sea understand the term—is not the necessary, can't-be-done-without individual as in days gone by. Iron, steel and steam have changed the order of things, and the crew's chief business of the day, in doing what is required whether in port or at sea, can be done more efficiently by Lascar crews than by others, owing to the increase in numbers. Chipping or scraping iron or steel, painting, scrubbing or cleaning, holystoning decks, but cleaning, always cleaning, does not require a very high standard of intelligence to perform it. The painting is not of the order that would delight the heart of a professional coach painter, but of the kind that is performed in the shipyards by the red-lion gangs. A wad or a brush, it is all the same, paint and clean, clean and paint, is the order of the day from daylight till dark, from the first to the last of the voyage, the cleaning, like the work of Sisyphus, goes on for ever ! There is very little sailorising, as seamen call it, to do nowadays ; occasionally a few ropes or a bit of wire to be spliced, a few slings for cargo to be made, guys for derricks to be fitted, is about the full extent of this sort of work. There is never now any of the old watch and watch rivalry and excitement of making or shortening sail ; tacking or wearing ship is, for the modern Indian traders, as dead as pork or

mutton. The coal shovel is much more in evidence now than the "lee fore brace," and things being what they are the Lascar stands to score where the work is as we describe it, for, in distinct contrast to his European brother, he will sit patiently, day after day, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, with the chipping hammer until the task is completed. Not so content at this harassing work is the European, for your true, good old A.B. of twenty-five years past hated, positively hated, all he was capable of, all work of that kind. His present day brother appears to have the infection of it, and acts accordingly. The port rules for the River Hooghly certainly favour the employment of Lascars, for quite lately—in the last few years—the authorities have enacted against European seamen being exposed to the sun during certain hours of the day, except double awnings be provided to shelter him from the sun's rays. No sane persons will object to this as being more than right or proper; but even that, whether intended or not, has given a fillip to the employment of the Indian seaman, for the work has to go on, either in port or at sea. If the European is protected, the Indian is ever ready to take on the employment, with thanks to seamen's missions. Even the West Indian negro, who sometimes figures largely in the so-called European crews, would have the lawful sunshade as his right! In regard to these climatic conditions, Lord Brassey has lately given utterance to the remark "that English firemen stuck manfully to their work, but they suffered all the same!" Just so, and this is one of the principal factors that decide in favour of the Lascar crew. At sea the watches are arranged in the ordinary way of four hours for each watch in the stokehold and engine-room, followed by eight off. During the worst passages *down* the Red Sea, in July, August and September, the heat is most oppressive, even on deck under double awnings. In the stokehold the fireman does not have a very happy time. Should any one or the other cave in through sheer physical exhaustion the work is not upset or the watches disarranged. They harmonise more freely than Europeans at similar work, and shift round to help each other in keeping things going when any one falls out. This is due entirely to the more complete control the serang has over the men, of which he is the recognised head and leader.

Alan Oscar, in *School and Sea Days* (page 251), gives a little pen picture of these conditions, which we reproduce here for the benefit of those who have not the book to refer to. He says:

"In the Canal and Red Sea we had it very hot; a fireman came

up out of the stokehold one day, and going forward laid down on the fore-castle to get cool. A few minutes afterwards an engineer came up to look for him; he spurned the man with his foot, giving at the same time a gruff order 'Get up out of this and go to your work!' There was no reply. The man was dead! Heat apoplexy."

This is the sort of thing Lord Brassey referred to when saying "They stuck to their work, but suffered all the same"! We, in our experience of the last ten years constantly going up or down the Red Sea with Lascar crews, have never yet had a case of heat apoplexy to attend to, either in the Red Sea or out of that hot shop, which is not by any means the most suitable place for a white man to earn his living under such conditions. Mr. Frank T. Bullen, in his *Men of the Merchant Service*, in the chapter he devotes to the person we are now discussing, the marine fireman, writes: "I hope my countrymen will be able to find some employment more suitable." We not only hope as that lucid writer hopes, but we boldly declare that, in the Red Sea, it is not a white man's job! A well known critic and writer on matters maritime has lately and repeatedly said:

"Shipmasters and chief engineers are a greater power for good or evil on the manning question than either conscription or subsidy. England requires of her shipmasters and engineers that they shall prefer British seamen and firemen whenever possible, and fortunately there are still many of her shipmasters who are on the side of their race. Liverpool has more specially proved hostile to British-born seamen; then to Liverpool let us go for a refutation of the calumny,"

and quotes the opinion of two well-known masters of Atlantic liners, both of the White Star, one of whom had said:

"An English seaman may be troublesome, and so may a Scandinavian, and if the Scandinavian is troublesome, he is generally *very* troublesome.' The other says 'In fine weather the Englishman may growl a little, but in bad weather you never have any trouble with an English sailor; and to have him as a stand-by at such times I am willing to put up with a little difficulty now and then; besides, *half the trouble that is experienced with Jack comes from a lack of fair play in treating him.*'"

London is of the same opinion, according to Captain Tuke:

"If you want discipline, he says, get British-born seamen and *treat them well*. There are plenty of them if you are *prepared to pay the price*. Charges of insubordination and insobriety will probably be found more especially prevalent in lines of sailing vessels and steamers where the man before the mast is regarded as less worthy of consideration than any item in the inventory."

Captain Tuke, we believe, is—or was when these words first appeared—connected with the Orient line of steamers to

Australia, yet since that time the Orient line have been smitten by the Lascar fever, in the stokehold and the engine-room department! Did not some of the Irish members of Parliament endeavour to elicit from the Orient Company the dates on which specific charges of either drunkenness or insubordination occurred, which was stated to be the reason for making the change, and for their trouble got little or no information? We saw the R.M.S. *Ophir* arrive in Colombo Harbour a few weeks ago (about March 19), and we feel sure our Aryan brother was in evidence on deck while she was mooring, though they were not occupied in doing anything towards it! In regard to that famous ship and her historical trip, it was well, for the harmony of that voyage, that her old crew of firemen were not retained, as intended in the original arrangement, but were changed for firemen of Naval training, only shortly before the voyage commenced. Was it not on the subject of their refusing to be vaccinated that decided the change? It was well they showed their hand early; it would have been much more awkward later on! *That* trip down the Red Sea was made under the most favourable conditions in the worst part. Going south with a fresh S.S.W. breeze, the temperature of the air eighty degrees and the sea eighty-four degrees, passing the Zebayir Islands on April 4, 1901, the firemen would be having, comparatively, a rosy time. This is somewhat of a digression, so we return to the matter of opinions of shipmasters on the question of sailors, or rather of crews. Those we have quoted are collected from the liners in the Atlantic trade. We are concerned with the Eastern trade, where Lascars are employed almost exclusively. Without going exhaustively into the matter to analyse the weather that mostly prevails on these trips, but just guessing, it may be comforting to the timid passenger to know that, taking the year all round, the Indian trader only spends about one-eighth or a little more of the time in bad weather, and this not generally of a severe kind; so there is not much scope or demand for the special "stand-by" business. If inquirers would really like to have opinions about discipline the Royal Albert or Tilbury Docks on the Thames, or the Toxteth, Harrington, Morpeth, or Wallasey on the Mersey, will afford ample opportunities to get the best of information on the subject. The masters, mates and engineers of the steamers manned by Lascars will, we are sure, be quite ready and willing to explain on the spot in what way their lives are made more bearable—made, in fact, worth living, such as it is. In these matter-of-fact days self-defence goes for something, and to justify one's job is a thing to be considered, for this is an

age of fierce commercial competition and of comparisons in every possible and conceivable way. Sentiment finds little opportunity in ship management, and the laws of supply and demand, with due consideration to the fittest for their requirements, are exploited to the bitter end. Thus, those who become undesirable, or in any way render themselves objectionable from faults of their own or those of other people, from incapacity, misfortunes, sheer bad luck, indifference or cussedness, are soon removed and replaced by others at once. No chance theirs to try on any dog-in-the-manger policy, while he of the Great Power maintains his everlasting trick at the Helm. No waiting for bricks in these strenuous times, when competition of the keenest kind from our foreign rivals—bolstered up in every way by the fostering care, advice and friendliness of their solicitous Governments—has to be encountered in playing off the important national game of sea carriers, which has to be met by realising on every form of economy; for the Spirit of the Age, Dividends, must be propitiated, no matter the sacrifice; for the shipowner, it is said, is not concerned in nationality; all he requires is that the men are at once cheap and efficient, and that sufficient are available. Those who will not when they may just move out and make room for those who will when opportunity offers. Thus the chance for the Lascars began, and thus it continues, for when a new crew is shipped, say at Bombay, they can be depended on to be on board at the time agreed upon, and, what is of more importance, they are ready for their work, which is a point in Sir Thomas Sutherland's remark that "without Lascar crews it would be impossible to maintain their services with anything like their usual regularity and precision." If the *Indian Merchant Shipping Act of 1883* is merely copied *en bloc* from our Merchant Shipping Act of an earlier date, with the necessary alterations to suit Indian conditions, it may be assumed that any difference in the text from our own will, in the event of any question arising thereon, be interpreted according to the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894, as in the case of the accommodation question. The articles of agreement and account of crew and official log book do not differ materially from those issued at the ports in the United Kingdom, except in regard to the geographical limits where the Lascar shall and shall not serve, the food scale, the larger number of regulations provided for maintaining discipline—not necessarily because they are not only required, but simply because they were, not so very long ago, common to all British Articles, and have not been abolished or allowed to fall into desuetude, as in the case of our own—and the common term of twelve months, a

special clause regarding smuggling, and of course the inevitable "And the said crew agree to conduct themselves in an orderly, faithful, honest, and sober manner, and to be at all times diligent in their respective duties, and to be obedient to the lawful commands of the said master or of any person who shall lawfully succeed him, and of their superior officers, etc., etc." When the new crew join the steamer at Bombay they do so under the care of the shipping office broker, who stands sponsor for the men receiving their advance of a month's pay.

If any of the crew who are shipped do not turn up at the time appointed for them to be on board, or at the medical inspection are rejected as medically unfit, the broker always has spare men to fill up the gaps; in fact, lately it has been the custom to ship a few more than the proper number, so as to provide against the weeding out process, and to pay a fee for the accommodation to those not required if there are no rejections. Thus the broker pays the men in cash their advance on joining, and is there on the spot when the vessel leaves, and knows well that they are on board. If the vessel should go to Europe and return to Bombay, the crew are, of course, discharged in the usual way as the voyage is ended; but if the vessel does not return to Bombay but goes trading anywhere within the scope of the articles, and the scope is very wide, the crew remain until the time—twelve months—is expired, and it is specially provided for that in the event of a steamer being under charter, or bound for India or Burma when that occurs, they bind themselves if required to complete the voyage to such destination. Thus with these crews there is not a change of men at the end of each passage. They make, except in the case of a direct return to Bombay, two, three or four complete voyages; they are on board in port in India, in the United Kingdom or the Continent, and stick steadily to their work, and are always there when wanted at times out of the ordinary hours of working, such as shifting about the quays, dry-docking or changing docks. They do it willingly, too, well understanding that ship-work cannot always be regulated in the same manner as the hours of labour in a shop on shore. They are quite ready when required to shift into another steamer, going over as a whole crew, and are thus more completely the servants of the shipowner while under engagement than any other group of men doing similar work that shipowners have ever had to do the work for them. At sea, the ordinary watch and watch system does not obtain among Lascars, but that which is known to Europeans as the Calassie watch, i.e., "all hands at all times." They work all day, and sleep o' nights like other men, except those, of course,

who are told off for the "lookout." Taken altogether, a much more efficient state of discipline prevails on the Lascar-manned steamer than can ever be hoped for on similar vessels manned by the ordinary type of European crews, such as are daily shipped in ports of the United Kingdom, particularly those of the Bristol Channel, to harry our ships all over the seven seas. Several circumstances account for this being so. We have remarked before that the proper number for a ship's crew is arrived at by considering the heaviest work they will be called on to perform. Some of the Indian ports have regulations that require crews being maintained on board in certain numbers, and where natives are employed instead of Europeans fifty per cent. more are required to fulfil the regulations. This may or may not be a fair ratio of physical fitness between the two races, but the fact remains that when a steamer is manned by Lascars much larger numbers are allowed by the shipowner, approximately nearer to one hundred per cent.—rather than fifty—more than would be allowed to the same vessel with Europeans. This, because the men are cheap and efficient? Here, then, is a very sufficient reason to anticipate better discipline, for numbers tell when the ordinary work of running a steamer and her proper maintenance are in full swing. Such vessels will compare favourably with any afloat, as other things are generally equal, and a proper number of officers and petty officers are carried, so that things may be done decently and seamanlike. Three watches for officers is an indispensable condition at sea for having a vessel efficiently looked after. A Lascar-manned steamer, very properly, is never without an officer in charge on the bridge. Not in vessels of this description do the officers have to neglect their proper duties and dance round after two or three hands at washing decks or clearing up holds immediately after leaving port to be ready for cargo at the next, leaving the vessel to the tender mercy of the man at the wheel (who may also be the only one to keep a lookout), and a menace to every other vessel that comes along! The work gets done, and decently done, without the officers having to off coats and bustle about like a bo'sn's mate, trying, and many a time expected, to do as much as two or three men, while a few hulking sea labourers just jog along as they please, playing "ca'canny."

Another reason, and the strongest, is the racial difference so well understood of the Indian, when in touch with the *Sahib logue*; the breach is too wide to be easily stepped over, consequently there is all the difference between those who are paid for the purpose of being hewers of wood or drawers of water and

those who engage for other purposes. They may take a lot of looking after to have things quite satisfactory, not merely to keep them up to the mark, as it were, but because it is necessary at all times that workers should know they are being well looked after, that their good and bad qualities are equally well known. Ordinary respect and civility is the rule, rather than the exception. It is very rare, indeed, that one has a case for disrating, except it be an incompetent fireman, who reverts to coal trimming for a change, as they are engaged on different rates of pay, depending on length of sea service. The *pukka* Lascar graduates in this manner from a first entry or boy, until he attains the rating of a *topman*, the equivalent of the A.B. The rates of pay are stated in a column on his continuous discharge, so it is a very easy matter when engaging to make the necessary selection of the various grades allowed by the shipowner for a crew. Serangs, tindels, topmen, storekeepers, firemen, coal trimmers, cooks, and servants have wages fixed as though a law of the Medes and of the Persians ruled it, for it has not varied in any degree for many years. The same scale of pay obtained long before there were only 335 of them employed in the merchant service! No boatswain of an ordinary British merchant vessel has such complete control over the crew he has to work and manage to the same extent as a serang—the boatswain's equivalent—has over his Lascars. No leading fireman or engine-room petty officer of an ordinary British steamer can compete with the engine-room serang in keeping control of the black squad. Thus the officer or engineer of the Lascar-manned steamer scores immensely over his less fortunate *confrère* in other vessels, with fewer workers, where they have to be continually bossing everybody from the first to the end of the watch, and end of the voyage. This circumstance is due to the serang providing the men required for a crew. The principal officer of the department concerned generally engages the serang in the first instance—there are always lots of applicants for the place—the serang then selects the people required for the department, and musters them for inspection and approval, or otherwise. When the final selection is made they are shipped in the usual manner, and ordered to join at a certain time to commence the voyage.

It is said of the serangs that they have too much power over the men, and that they, in fact, squeeze them for *Dustoorie*. They may, or they may not, but the fact remains that each man as he is paid off receives his pay in full from the hands of the Shipping Master himself at the Shipping Office, or

at the pay table if paying off occurs on board the steamer. What the men do with their earnings after they receive it is entirely their own affair, notwithstanding the impervious customs of the East, which no government can get over or suppress. There is no connivance except by the men concerned, and, if it is so, then it is custom, as much as it is iniquitous. We are inclined to the opinion, if it obtains at all, that it is very trifling, as the men are much too keen on their beloved *pice* to allow themselves to be duped, even by the man who selects them for engagement. The Lascar is not one whit behind his European brother in knowing exactly what he is allowed and entitled to, while his thrift would make the average Jew turn green with envy at the lessons to be learned from him. With such a strong regard for their earnings, the fear of punishment, inflicted by small fines, is an undoubted incentive to their good behaviour, for if it is necessary to bring one of them up with a round turn for any flagrant breach of the ordinary regulations that obtain, one has only to threaten to cut their pay to be sure the offender will amend his manner, and fall into line with their general all round behaviour. To their credit, be it said, instances rarely occur, and when it does it invariably ends with the inevitable, "Sahib, you are my father and my mother!" Take them all round they are handled under ordinary circumstances as easily as children, their wants are small, they are easily satisfied, and, given a fair share of attention, are positively contented.

The system makes for this, as each group of men has a cook allotted to them whose business is entirely devoted to the preparation and cooking of the food for the men they are concerned with. The rations they are allowed by the ordinary scale of provisions provided on the agreement is really more than they can actually consume, unless an unusual lot of gluttons should be shipped at any time. This is easily proved by the way they manage to save up large quantities of their food stuffs to sell over the side in port, or to take on shore with them if they were allowed to do so. The cooking is, perhaps, not quite of the high class order, but it is of their own particular mode, method, and requirements. They draw their rations and cook to suit themselves; the serang provides the cook for engagement as he does the others. It is very rare indeed to have a complaint about food at any time, as it is entirely in their own hands. Nearly all steamship work is of the order that must be described as dirty, hence the incessant cleaning that goes on. There are some parts of it dirtier still, and in Lascar crews there will be found men of the

sweeper (*bunghi*) caste, specially engaged for doing the dirtiest work. He is rated as a *topass*; very often he is a Christian (!) from Goa, the land of servants, that nowadays provides the Eastern fleets of British steamers with butlers, stewards, cooks, waiters and domestics of every kind required in the modern ocean-going steamer. As a class these servants compare very favourably with those of similar ratings among European crews, especially the cooks, who are what they pretend to be, and can do efficiently what they engage for. Decently cooked, palatable food is always provided on the tables where the Europeans live, and if it is not exactly *recherché*, it is a long way above the average of the ordinary sea cook skill, such as we were accustomed to before our acquaintance with these men began. It is very well known that nothing affects the contentment of a ship's crew, as of other men, as the ability of the cook to do his business properly, and the schools of sea-cookery that are now to be found in some of our great seaports have certainly not been established too soon. Shipmasters now in engaging an ordinary European crew can get men who have had some training and practice such as a course at these places provide, over and above their sea experiences, whatever they may be; so, given material to work with, it is to be hoped that the new order of things may make for contentment under this head, and remove the reproach of our Yankee critics that to "pick out the dirtiest man on a British ship, and the food-spoiler stands revealed"! Whether the successful cook should be certificated or not remains to be proved, for the Goanese cooks of the Lascar-manned steamer have only their continuous discharge to prove their fitness for the post they take on with such marked ability, and an examination of their discharges would show more often than not that they graduate to the place in course of time from their entry as scullions, butchers' mates, or similar places. The British India Steam Navigation Company's steamers are, perhaps, the chief training ground for these people in the lower grades. From there they scatter all through the various fleets where Lascars are carried. Let our new-time cooks have certificates by all means, but it remains to be proved whether or not it will be the means of them putting a price on themselves that the ordinary shipowner will not look at. It is a very trite remark that a good cook is worth paying for, and that a cheap cook is a dear cook at any price; yet it is too often overlooked that the cook of an ordinary British vessel has more work to do than he can actually manage with any fair expectation that it should be decently done. A cook, or a man who takes on the dual duty of cook and steward, for a

crew of perhaps twenty to thirty or more men is often enough found. This class of man works like a Trojan; is invariably of the kind the Yankee critic fired at; satisfies nobody, but earns all he gets in a vain endeavour to do more than he is equal to. Someone suffers where this sort of thing obtains, and we write with very fair knowledge of the system. This is not so much the point we wish to discuss as the fact that a cook, when engaged as such, is not generally furnished with proper assistants in the same way that obtains on the Lascar manned steamer of the ordinary carrier type. The passenger steamer is not in our province just now. To state a case and explain this properly: the vessel we now command is allowed a crew of fifty-six men. Of these sixteen are Europeans on the ordinary European Articles; the remaining forty are Lascars on the Lascar Agreement. Of this number, seven, including the European steward who runs them, are actually cooks or servants, four of them being cooks pure and simple, although the chief cook invariably engages as chief cook and baker. On the other hand, a British vessel with the ordinary European crew is allowed a cook, in a general way, if the number runs up to about thirty or so, or even less than that. When the numbers increase to forty there is probably still only one cook, and even up to fifty or more the chances are that the cook will have no more assistance than he can get out of a boy, probably a first voyager. The cook, under these conditions, does not have a lovely time, for where the ordinary watch and watch system still obtains it means one man constantly at his cooking pots serving up to the different groups as they come along in twos or threes and carry away themselves whatever it may be their luck to receive for the meal they certainly require, and have perhaps worked for. An over-worked cook is not likely to worry much over appetising dishes unless compelled to, and the people of least consequence in the food spoiler's estimation suffer accordingly. There is even a worse state of affairs now in vogue, though happily we have no experience of it, yet firmly believe it to be true, as our information is gathered from reliable sources. It is well known now that some vessels owned somewhere in the north of England and the Bristol Channel are contracted out to provision dealers, who not only put on board the stores for the voyage but the steward and cook as well. The former, sometimes acting in the dual capacity, has control of the whole of the commissariat, and is on articles at a mere nominal wage—probably a shilling a month—and is paid actually by results from his real employer, the provision dealer. This is playing the game very low indeed,

for the minimum scale only can obtain when the operator's earnings are decided by and depend upon results. This, however, is a shipmaster's question, which will probably be heard of in other ways, for any person placed on a vessel under such conditions is beyond the reach of any disciplinary measures except that of the "boot and fist" style, which cannot make for contentment of any kind! If this latter day plan had been adopted by shipowners in a spirit intended to give their employees sufficient well cooked food there would not be much, except the question of discipline, to be said against it; but when we are told that in such vessels the master turning up—say in harbour—after the ordinary meal times has to pay even for a cup of tea, or anything he might require, it is not to be expected that any liberality is adopted for the sake of the proletariat. What the shipowner pays his contractor per head may be liberal or it may not, but the very fact of doing part of one's business in this manner implies a desire to be rid of trouble and responsibility in the matter. What has the contractor to do with the crew, or care for them either, when he never sees them or comes in touch with them at all, even in a less marked manner than the average ship manager, who rarely sees them in real life? It is much to be feared that this system will perpetuate the starvation food scale adopted in 1854 for British ships, and which costs to furnish the food supplied under it about sixpence per man per day. The detail of this amount is set out plainly in an article on Seamen's Food and Accommodation in the January number of the *Nautical Magazine*, 1901, and much besides that is interesting, and is not at all drawn upon by fanciful ideas. It must be a matter of very real regret that such a pernicious system has been permitted to get a footing, for the real comfort of the people affected by it must necessarily be of the lowest possible.

Lest it be considered from the remarks we have made concerning Lascars that we are unfair in comparing them with other crews, it is proper to state that under certain conditions a Lascar can give a good deal of trouble and annoyance too, for his frequent voyages to the United Kingdom have provided him with lots of opportunities of getting in touch with Trade Unionists' delegates and others who loaf round the docks and quays at seaports in the interests of their clients. The Lascar is not slow to learn even that which he could do well without, and under anything like weak control would soon show signs of the taint if he fancied himself being rubbed against the nap! If they occasionally squabble and row

among themselves it can be traced more often than not to their immediate private affairs, and, although it may be bubble and squeak as a rule, they have learned that the Sahib *has* to look after them, and a malingerer, resenting suspicion, may threaten to jump overboard, knowing quite well that, if he were suffered to do so, the consequent trouble would be ample compensation from his point! "For ways that are dark," the Lascars, native like, are positively inscrutable, even tricky at times, yet with all their faults and many weaknesses we do not hesitate to state that they make most satisfactory crews for steam traders to the East, where Sundays and holidays are almost impossible. It often occurs that a steamer leaving Liverpool for an ordinary Indian voyage late on Saturday night, or early on Sunday morning, will have her affairs so arranged that scarcely a Sunday passes but what the boat is either in the canal, or arriving at, or leaving some place on the voyage. One or two at the most quiet Sundays is all that may be looked for, and these, at sea, bring the daily work and routine like other days. People who are keen on having quiet Sundays and the holidays of the calendar must not go to sea for a living; competition and comparisons do not permit of days of rest for the seafarer, as is the case of those who are careful to stay above low water mark of our shores.

Regarding the Committee now sitting under the presidency of Sir Francis Jeune to inquire into the condition of the mercantile marine and the cause of the decline in the number of Britishers employed, it has been seriously suggested that the chairman should call for a return of the number of bad discharges given to seamen during the last twenty or thirty years, ostensibly to prove that the V.G. character has been indiscriminately given, whether it was deserved or not. There will not be much information to be gathered under this head, inasmuch as there are no bad discharges ever given beyond that of the prescribed form "Dec." which signifies "Decline to report" upon the man's character, no matter what the cause. Under Section

"240 M.S.A. 1894. The master of a ship for which an official log is required shall enter or cause to be entered in the official log book the following matters (4) a statement of the conduct, character, and qualifications of each of his crew, or a statement that he declines to give an opinion on these particulars. Section 129 (1) Where a seaman is discharged before a superintendent the master shall make and sign, in a form approved by the Board of Trade (a) a report of the conduct, character, and qualifications of the seaman discharged, or may state in the said form that he declines to give any opinion upon

such particulars, or upon any of them, and the superintendent before whom the discharge is made shall, *if the seaman desires*, give to him or endorse on his certificate of discharge a copy of such report (in this Act referred to as the report of character); (2) The superintendent shall transmit the reports to the Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen, or to such other person as the Board of Trade may direct to be recorded."

In the form approved by the Board of Trade, the characters to be stated on the seaman's discharge are set forth in a foot note on pages 3, 4, and 5 of the Official Log, and described as V.G. for "Very Good"; G. for "Good," or Dec. "Decline to report." Section 130 of the Merchant Shipping Act provides that if any person makes a false report of character, knowing the same to be false, he shall in respect of each offence be guilty of a misdemeanour. There is not much scope allowed to the shipmaster under this official rule of three; he must not exercise his talent for describing the good, excellent, fair average, indifferent, middling, sober, bad, or worse qualities of any of his crew either for ability or general conduct, except in the manner prescribed by the Board of Trade, for which there is no special enactment. Owing to the discharges having been made out in this fashion for many, many years, the information to be gathered from the records would only reveal that shipmasters had in certain cases "declined to report," and whether they are few or many, the records will not show on what grounds, for the shipmaster who knows his business keeps that information to himself, as it is entirely his affair, though consuls, and superintendents of mercantile marine offices also, are not always free from a desire to interfere in matters with which they have nothing whatever to do. Thus recently, to quote a letter dated May 17, 1902, from the secretary of the Merchant Service Guild,

"The Consul-General at Havre in making his annual report spoke (or wrote) of not 'allowing' masters to give a 'decline to report' discharge unless *he* thought there was ground for it, and insinuated that masters were not in a manner fitted to have the extra power which the continuous discharges vests in them."

This affair put the Guild at once in communication with the Board of Trade, from which it appears that the Consul-General *had to be* officially informed that the responsibility of giving characters to the seamen employed on board a ship rests with the master alone. This is merely an instance of the ideas that obtain among those who ought to know a good deal better what their functions and powers are in matters of this kind, and those who frequent Mercantile Marine Offices in

different parts of the United Kingdom and Shipping Offices and Consulates abroad in dealing with crews get a very fair knowledge of the exaggerated ideas of power and importance that sometimes obtain in many of those places. Shipmasters are quite alive to this, and send in their log books made up to the time of arrival, with nothing to be affixed but the final stamp and signature. The characters of the crew are already inscribed against their names, from which it is copied on the seaman's discharge, "if the seaman desires it!" In one well-known Liverpool Company that employs some thousands of hands in their services, it has always been an established rule to write up the report of character of the crew with "G." for all and sundry, unless in those cases where even that doubtful value was not deserved, and the "Dec." had perforce to appear instead. But why, in the name of all that is reasonable, is it left to the seaman's sweet will and pleasure to decide whether he will or not have his discharge endorsed with the characters allotted to him by the shipmaster who furnishes the information under compulsion of the law? The inference is that a good character will never be omitted from the discharge, while a doubtful one—"decline to report" will never be accepted while it is left to the whim of the seaman. Under the system of continuous discharges now in vogue these will tell their own story, if the spaces provided are properly cancelled at the time of discharge. If discharges are of any value at all, there should be no option in the matter in the merchant service, any more than there is in the Royal Navy or the Army.

In some of the late shipping deals of last year and of this, many of the shipmasters and officers concerned in the change of ownership must have been considerably shocked at the very cool manner in which they had been left. Flattering themselves in many cases on the name, fame and stability of the firm who condescended to patronise them, and where many of them had spent perhaps the greater part of their lives, their simple loyalty deserved a better or more kindly fate than merely to be started off again under the new *régime* of the stranger and money-grubber, old and young alike, on a fresh footing. Service of many years goes for nothing. One has no right to expect anything under such conditions when it is a mere question of being paid for services rendered, but the object lesson provided in some of the cases is certainly interesting. We called on one of the shipowners concerned who was retiring from shipping with about a modest million to his credit. In the course of conversation we were soon reminded that the British shipmaster and officer of to-day does not, from this

worthy one time shipowner's view, compare favourably with the German shipmaster and officer. This bald statement was based on making a passage between Naples and Genoa on a North German Lloyd boat. There is also an increasing preference for German steamers by passengers to and fro from the East, with which, however, shipmasters or officers have little or nothing to do, inasmuch as the better hotel service provided by the vessels of the German nation are the chief attraction, to say nothing of the keener attention to small wants, the cheaper rates, and the band! As this matter has been the subject of considerable controversy in the Press at different times, we would fain ask why most of our principal hotels are under the active management of foreigners? If it is really a fact that the German shipmaster and ship's officer is a better all round man than his British *confrère* the reason for it being so is not at all difficult to point out and prove. The system of qualifying for the places of mates and masters in the German merchant vessel is very different from the affairs as conducted by the Local Marine Boards in this country of ours. In the first place, the candidate must be a German. The examinations through the various grades require a much higher standard of education to enable him to qualify than is the case as required here for similar places; thus with all the German thoroughness in doing this, as in other matters, there is not, nor is there any possible likelihood of being, anything like the number of certificates issued year for year, taken on the basis of tonnage of that country as compared with our own.

We were told, under two years ago, in the port of Hamburg, by the harbour fathers—a quartette of ancient mariners who superintend officially all shipping affairs of that busy, bustling, well-managed port—that German steamers at that time were under-officered, owing to there being insufficient to go round even with the vessels running at that time, that an officer could rely on an appointment as soon as he qualified. This is a striking contrast to what obtains here, under the policy adopted by the Local Marine Board and sanctioned by the Board of Trade, the policy that the men shall be at once cheap and efficient, and that sufficient are available. If the opinion of the shipowner we have quoted is shared by others as a class—and we hope it is not—we would suggest that they have got exactly what they in their wisdom have provided for; the Local Marine Boards have been partly under their administration from their first institution, and the evolution of the shipmaster as he is now is entirely of their own fashioning from the standard they created and adopted when the navigation laws were abolished at their

own particular instance in their demand for free trade in shipping. Had a higher standard of education, scientific training and professional requirements proper, been established when the momentous and eventful change came on, and maintained thereafter in the front rank during the march and ordinary progress of events in all matters relating to the rapid changes of the last half century, is it to be suggested that the seafaring Britisher would have been unable to rise superior to such requirements, or that he, in fact, is less brainy than the seaman of other nations? British shipowners, or the more modern ship manager, have no right whatever to complain on this head, when they know quite well, without being reminded, that the cause of it is entirely of their own making with studied intention. At all events the class created for their requirements are quite good enough to all intents and purposes, considering what share of the crumbs of the loaves and fishes fall to their lot for the life they lead and live, and patiently endure. The only cause for astonishment is, considering the downright shabby treatment they are mostly subject to, that the men are half as good as they are. Small wonder, then, that the British shipmaster does not compare favourably with those of the German nation. That enterprising and pushful race in the present time evolution of their country from agriculturism to commercialism are making a bold bid for a fair share of the world's carrying trade, perhaps the most pronounced form of their modern commercial life, and a direct response to the Kaiser's notable utterance that "Germany's future lies upon the water," notwithstanding the immediate retort of Herr —, representing the agricultural interest, that "Germany's future lies upon a midden"! With the Emperor and all the country at his back, figuratively patting and applauding him in every possible way, the Teuton would be a very poor, degenerate, spiritless being indeed if he did not feel himself to be a man of some importance in his country's affairs, and carry himself accordingly! The incident of the breakdown of the Cunard *Pavonia* and the Hamburg-American *Bulgaria*, in the early days of 1899, are quite fresh in the memory of those who live on the sea, and the following remarks in Notes on Current Events, from the April number of the *Nautical Magazine*, illustrates aptly our statement:

"*Palmas qui meruit.*—After the annual meeting of the Cunard Company Directors they received in the board-room the master and officers of the *Pavonia*. The Right Honourable Lord Inverclyde, chairman, read a vote of thanks to Captain Atkin, his officers and crew, passed at the general meeting, setting forth the resolution, endurance,

and skill displayed—extolling their brave and seamanlike conduct—expressing admiration for the gallantry of all concerned, and awarding the Company's warmest thanks, not only for the services rendered, but also for the lustre added to the doings of the fleet. A sum of £500 was distributed among the crew according to their rating. Captain Atkin returned thanks, and said he and his crew had only done their duty. The Committee of Lloyd's awarded the silver medal and certificate of the Society to Captain Atkin and Chief Engineer T. Duncan, as also to Chief Officer Taylor, First Officer Frith, Second Officer Bryce, Second Engineer Charteris, and Third Engineer Bains, as honorary acknowledgments of excellent service rendered. On the 7th inst., at a crowded meeting in Liverpool Town Hall, the Lord Mayor conferred the awards on the officers of the *Pavonia*. When the German liner *Bulgaria*, which had also been towed to the Azores in distress during the same gale, arrived at Plymouth she was boarded by the Mayor and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Mercantile Association, who presented Captain Schmidt with an illuminated address of congratulation. When the *Bulgaria* reached Hamburg she was met by representatives of the Emperor, the Navy, and the Army, a speech was made to the crew by Admiral Köster, and decorations distributed. The town was *en fête*, and addresses followed by a banquet greeted the return of the wanderers. England accepts bravery at sea as a mere matter of course."

The action of the Cunard Company in this affair, though not one whit more than they should have done, must be described as a rather unusual proceeding for stolid Britishers; one therefore rather wonders what would have happened in the case of the *Pavonia* had the beating of the *Bulgaria* drum never been heard! Another case mentioned in the same magazine for March, 1901, is even more pronounced.

"Captain Christoffers, Norddeutscher Lloyd, on completing his two-hundredth voyage was entertained at a dinner at Bremerhaven a few days ago. The Norddeutscher Lloyd Company presented him with an address and £500. The Bremen Chamber of Commerce added a silver tankard and an address, and the Kaiser filled the bill with a decoration of the Fourth Class of the Order of the Eagle. Very few British shipmasters have such high honour awarded. Evidently the German merchant navy will not go to leeward if the Kaiser can prevent it either by word or by deed."

There are other cases of more recent occurrence, but those quoted are sufficient for our purpose. Where is the man in the present time British merchant service who has been honoured of his country by his King or Queen, for his purely merchant service work? There is not a single solitary case. Honours, rewards, or glory are not for them. Even when the dogs of war are let loose, and they of all the Empire's ready sons must

take the first and last hands in the game, the case does not alter. *Syren and Shipping* of the 2nd July, 1902, has an article on "War honours for the Merchant Navy," which we take the liberty of quoting.

"At least 1,000 officers and 80,000 men have served the State, during the recent war, on board all sorts and conditions of merchant ships—transports, hospital ships, and store ships, and there is not the least need for us to demonstrate that they have carried this highly important work to a successful issue with skill, courage and devotion to duty. Are they to be the only class of non-combatants to be either forgotten or ignored when medals and ribbons are bestowed? England cannot do other than reward the men of her mercantile marine who were ever ready in her hour of need, and without whom her very existence as a nation would be imperilled. Many of her sailor sons, some of them, be it remembered, officers of the Royal Naval Reserve who resigned their commissions for the purpose, volunteered for the front and saw much active service in one or other of the various army corps that carried the British flag to victory. It is not of these men we desire to write, inasmuch as they will certainly receive the war medal or such recognition as shall be awarded to Tommy Atkins in the near future. We are here more nearly concerned with the officers and men of the British merchant ships that carried to South Africa the troops with phenomenal immunity from shipwreck or disaster of any kind, and also those officers and men who served steadfastly on board the several ships devoted to hospital purposes, or that in any way contributed to the success of the British arms in South Africa. The War Office, the Admiralty and the Board of Trade all appear to regard with favour the views set forth by the friends and representatives of our merchant seamen that they should receive recognition in the shape of a decoration of some sort. After the first Egyptian Expedition in 1882, when Arabi Pasha was overthrown, the Egyptian medal and the Khedive's bronze star were bestowed upon the masters of all hired transports which had arrived in Egyptian waters within a specified period, and thus contributed to ensuring for England the fruits of victory. What is it then that apparently stops the way, when a question is raised with respect to the eminent desirability of dealing similarly with the officers and men of the merchant ships engaged in bringing South Africa within measurable distance of the heart of the British Empire? We know for a fact that officers of high rank in the Royal Navy would be delighted by the country quickly awakening to the excellent assistance rendered to the British Army in South Africa by the ships and the crews of our mercantile marine. We may have the money, we may even have the ships; but it will be a bad day for England should she even be in want of masters, officers and men, of British birth, to take the ships to sea and bring them back again without mishap. Depend upon it, if Germany had brought so harassing a war to a successful issue, Kaiser Wilhelm would have strained every nerve to reward not only his war navy, but also his merchant navy.

True, our countrymen under the red ensign only did their duty. But how well they did it is a matter for congratulation by every Britisher, and there only remains now for the powers that be to let the whole mercantile marine of this country clearly see they are not regarded as so many cogs in a wheel. Unless England fully arouses herself to the too frequent neglect of the officers and men of her merchant shipping, she is likely to have a rude awakening before long; for the white Britisher, of good repute, will surely avoid the sea, and leave the calling to the foreigner, the Lascar, and the Chinaman. Granting for the sake of argument, although not in any way freely admitted, that the deserters from foreign flags, and Asiatics of every sort, are useful supplanters of white seamen of British birth on board our carrying craft in the piping times of peace, what would they prove should England become embroiled in a naval war with a Continental Power? Then let the British nation hasten to show that they are not unmindful of the men of the mercantile marine who carried out the important duty of conveying troops and war material to South Africa. To the shame of England, be it said, she has not always dealt fairly with the officers and men of her mercantile marine. During the Crimean war, British transports and cargo carriers did excellent service. Take, for example, the P. & O. steamer *Colombo*, Captain R. Methven. When assisting to land the troops at Kertch, on its capture, Admiral Lord Lyons signalled 'Well done, *Colombo*!' At the combined attack on Sevastopol, the *Colombo* kept within range of the Russian forts and easy signalling distance of the Admiral, ready and eager to assist in towing out of action any disabled ship. If we remember rightly, Captain Methven sat on the bridge of the *Colombo* sketching or taking notes. A similar spirit prevailed on board every transport present. Yet an ungrateful country failed to reward either officers or men."

There is no uncertain tone about this, which is worthy of the very able shipping paper that produced it, though we have to regret that even in the special service for which the claim is made harmony did not always prevail on the vessels concerned in transport work, for while these words were fresh from the press only three days later there appeared in the *Liverpool Courier*, July 5, 1902, a remarkable article on fore-castle *personnel* in our mercantile marine, being a reply to criticism by H. B. Murdoch at Bombay in controversy with a T. W. on this very subject, which we reproduce to show that the transport work was not all of the picnic order.

"Passing over some trivial references to matters not bearing on the question, I come to what 'T. W.' evidently considers the *coup de grâce* of his closing arguments, i.e., the transport service and British crews employed therein. He treads on dangerous ground. Permit me to state, with the authority of one actively engaged in that service practically since the beginning, and with the opportunities of obtaining the views of the masters and officers of the steamers, that the employ-

ment of British seamen and firemen has been the one serious drawback to the satisfactory working of the transports. That satisfaction has been given to the Government and the public in the oversea transporting of so many thousands of troops and horses is well known; but, to the many cares and unceasing watchfulness required on the part of those in authority to produce these good results, has been added the constant worry of the dissolute material provided by the mercantile marine, in its dissolute seamen and firemen. The unwritten 'martial law' of nautical etiquette precludes one at the present time from dwelling otherwise than generally upon incidents of the service; but for the benefit of sentimentalists who would—to quote the words of your contributor—keep these ewe lambs 'unspotted from the world,' I may be permitted to give the following as an object lesson—it may not be without its value. In a South African port three British steamers lay in dock side by side, one, a transport, with the usual British crew, the others manned respectively by Lascars and Chinese. From the latter vessels not a man during their stay in port had been absent from his duties, while fully two-thirds of the transport's crew were being kept 'unspotted from the world in the local gaol, serving sentences for continual drunkenness and absence without leave.' Another transport, about the same period, sailed from the port, and the cheerful spectacle was afforded to onlookers of drunken British seamen and firemen being marched on board in the custody of the police. The transport sailed with a number of these noble sons of the sea locked up in the vessel's guardroom. These are no isolated cases, and did space or circumstances permit instances of the sort could be cited *ad nauseam*. I venture to say that not a single transport engaged during this war has been immune from the pest of drunken seamen and firemen. In the article on 'The disease and the remedy,' I quoted the words uttered at a public gathering by a commander in the transport service, a gentleman of the widest experience and whose opinion on nautical matters carries conviction and respect. As the quotation appears to have escaped the notice of my criticiser I will take the liberty of repeating it: 'The amount of trouble arising from this cause alone has been incalculable. I do not hesitate to affirm that by their misconduct they have delayed the progress of the war more than any thousand Boers that have come into the field.' This, sir, is my reply to the question put to me by my critic *re* the transport service. It voices, I think, the opinion of every master, officer, and engineer in that service. It may be pertinently asked what the alternative should have been? Firstly, when the mercantile marine was called upon to supply transports, special articles should have been drawn up containing the rigid regulations and stern punishment for breaches of discipline under which the Navy is ruled. At the first outbreak these could have been enforced to the utmost letter, and a lesson taught throughout the service lasting in its effects. The existing Merchant Marine Law, under which the transports have been sailed, are the veriest mockery of authority. The masters' hands have been tied with the farcical

regulations and petty punishments for offenders. Secondly, presuming the authorities could not see their way to providing special articles for the transports, then the official log books of the ships should have been noted, the number of 'loggings' justifying the withdrawal of every British seaman and fireman from the service. In their place, *Lascars* could have been substituted. This would have been a graceful recognition to loyal India in her desire to assist the Imperial Government in the war; the transports would have been manned by British subjects, and, above all, the gain to the well-being of the service can only be realised by those who have been responsible for its efficiency. It has been sneeringly said that I 'plead' well for the foreigner. I hold no brief for any nationality, but I refuse to applaud the bathos of those who would idealise the drink-sodden pests who, with the misnomer of British seamen and firemen, disgrace the flag they sail under. The type of British merchant seaman I hope yet to live to see is one of whom it will be a pride to say 'He is my own countryman.' To this end the efforts of the new and progressive school are directed. In *The Manning Question in the Navy* I have urged the national importance of the mercantile marine as the only proper reserve and reinforcement for the Navy, but this can never be in the existing state of the fore-castle *personnel*. Sir, our seamen must be trained for the service, and as soon as this is recognised a step in the sorely needed reform will have begun, and a decisive answer given to the problem of naval defence. Let this be the task for the Government now that reform is preached from every platform, and schemes for Imperial defence are to the fore. In manning the mercantile marine with physically and morally properly trained British seamen, the strength of the Navy will be increased a hundredfold. Away, then, with the foolish twaddle of the idealist and infantile prattle of the tract distributor; we weary of it. Know that for the habitual drunkard and chronically dissolute there is no place in this busy, thriving world. The times are keenly competitive and progressive, and none but men of stability are needed in our undertaking. This is a materialist age, and men are weighed in the balance, by their worth and contribution to the well-being of the community do they justify their existence. Not ours the part as a nation to sit with folded hands idly watching the clouds drift by; the cry is ever 'Forward, Forward.' Aye, and the words shall ring wherever the English tongue is spoken, and in whatever land an Englishman plants his foot. For desperate diseases that, sapping the vitality of the nation, retard our onward progress, remedies as strong must be found, and these should be applied with no faltering or stinting hand. Off with the velvet glove! Too long has it been worn; the needs of the Empire call for a firmer grip. To visionary enthusiasts who feel it their particular mission in the world to 'pluck brands from the burning,' we leave the sentimental view. Assuredly these devotees have before them a large scope for the exercise of their vocation."

The editorial comment on this scathing, relentless critic is

just what might be expected of one who, desirous of being fair, has had no opportunity of knowing the sailor and his ways, but more particularly of the marine fireman and his ways, who has probably been the more immediate cause of general insubordination at sea than any other circumstance common to it. For much too long a time we have perhaps entertained the idea that the sea was only possible to ourselves for successful exploitation, owing probably to our insular conceit of being the "salt of the earth" as well as of the sea! Steam and electricity have altered all that. There are other Richmonds in the field. Even so shrewd an observer of seafarers as Captain Whall in his "School and Sea Days" gives himself away when he states on page 234:

"But with all his faults, the British sailor is the only one you can rely upon in a really tight pinch. Lascars have been very much belauded in late years. They are utterly useless in a sailing ship when a real emergency occurs. Scandinavians and Germans, classed by Jack under the generic term 'Dutchmen,' also fail in such cases."

Even so; still the Germans, certainly our keenest competitors in shipping at the present time, under the fostering care of the Kaiser and the Government, take very kindly to a life on the ocean wave, easily to be seen in the rapid growth, expansion, and the many ramifications of their mercantile marine, and the steady, constant, and persistent increase of their war fleets! Their express boats maintain the highest steam speeds ever attained; their large sailing ships—many of our own construction, but impossible of paying under the Red Ensign—have lately and repeatedly made the most rapid sea passages, particularly in runs between the Lizard and the West Coast of South America, so it is hardly correct to assume that tight corners at sea are the prerogatives solely of the Britisher! The sweet little cherub that sits up aloft looks out for the life of poor Jack, whether he be or not of the most favoured nation. Germany's encouragement to foster the seagoing spirit of her sons as exemplified in her shipmasters is something this salt sea sodden country of ours might copy with credit and advantage, for there they are recognised at their worth as the upholders of their country abroad, and at home they are treated as a *Sahib*, never as a *pariah*! This is a digression from Mr. Murdoch's criticism of the transport service; we must revert to the editorial which accompanied it.

"What must mere landmen think of the *personnel* of our mercantile marine, as depicted in the censorious article of Mr. H. B. Murdoch? He writes with very considerable experience of life and

work on board both sailing ships and steamboats, and the report he makes must be very disheartening to those who have believed that the mariners of England were improving and not deteriorating. The opinions he expresses and the actual facts he cites in justification of his views make it appear that a very large proportion of the sailors and firemen who serve in the British mercantile marine are 'dissolute idlers,' who are altogether unreliable. But may not his experience have been exceptional? He is convinced that the intemperate and neglectful habits of the seamen on the transports have been responsible for much of the troubles and disasters of the Boer war; and that Lascars and even Chinese are much more dependable for attention to duty. He recognises that the merchant steamers of the country have performed invaluable service to the nation in safely conveying so many thousands of troops, warlike stores, and provisions thousands of miles; but what has been accomplished was the result of the incessant vigilance maintained by masters and officers, who were subjected to endless worries through drink-loving sailors and firemen. Does he give a true picture of the general morals of the men employed in the mercantile marine? He claims to do so, and he ought to be circumspect when discussing the character of his own countrymen connected with the profession to which he himself belongs. If his statement is not gross exaggeration, if he even in an approximate degree accurately indicates the habit of those in fore-castle and stoke-hole, it is evident that there is still abundant scope for the operations of seamen's missionaries. The subject is of national importance. When there is so much talk about shipping combines operating against the interests of the British mercantile marine, when our merchant ships have a hard struggle to keep their place on the waters, it is calculated to increase the seriousness of the aspect of affairs to be told that the sailors on whom so much depends are worthless. Perhaps the mariners who are thus discredited will find a champion of equal experience to their vigorous censor. We are certainly loth to accept Mr. Murdoch's description of seafaring toilers as accurately indicating the conduct and character of more than a very small number of undesirables, such as are to be found among all sections of the people. But the ventilation of the subject will serve a useful purpose if it helps the 'dissolute idlers' to see themselves as others see them."

The *Liverpool Journal of Commerce*, of July 3, 1902, has a few words on the subject from

"Mr. Consul Keene, who, in the course of his annual report upon the trade of Genoa, thus refers to desertion: Desertion (chiefly in the firemen and trimmers' department) is an evil to which this port is particularly exposed owing to its being, in most cases, the first port of call from the United Kingdom, especially for coal vessels. The men have received a half month's advance on engagement, and, having as yet nothing due to them on arrival here, are careless of the consequences of any misbehaviour, and if fined, desert, expecting after

selling and disposing of the proceeds of their clothes to be taken charge of by the Consulate, and failing employment to be sent home at the public expense as distressed British seamen. This has had to be put down with a firm hand, and Genoa appears to be losing its reputation among 'wasters' as a happy hunting ground. A recent arrangement under which exceptionally undesirable characters are reciprocally reported to and by Consular officers along the coast between Marseilles and Naples is having good results, and doubtless the new continuous discharge books must be credited already with part of the improvement, although the masters are not all agreed on this point. The discouragement of desertion is not only necessary in the public interest but in that of seamen themselves, for it certainly contributes to the engagement of foreign seamen. Men legitimately discharged are either hospital cases or are at once sent home both in the men's and shipowner's interest, as the shipowner would otherwise be liable, in most cases, for any subsequent relief which might have to be afforded to the former. Consequently, vacancies in a ship's crew, created by desertion or otherwise, must usually be filled up either by deserters from other ships (if there are any) or by foreign seamen. The latter, at all events in this port, usually get the preference, and so misconduct and violation of agreement by desertion contribute to introduce the foreign element into British crews abroad, and to train up a body of foreign seamen eager to learn and compete for berths in the British merchant service. There can be no doubt that most British masters prefer a British crew at sea, where many even of those who give most trouble in ports are good workers, and can be relied on in moments of difficulty and danger; but this is not sufficient nowadays to exclude other factors, and the foreigner who gives less trouble in port and has made several voyages in British ships becomes daily a more serious competitor for employment. The foreign element once introduced into a ship's crew, other circumstances sometimes tend to increase it. The British seaman, partly from national characteristics, partly because he feels himself at home, intends to 'Boss the show,' and according to his success or failure in this respect either he, or perhaps the foreigner; is unhappy and deserts. On the other hand, even a mixed foreign crew get on well on the neutral ground of a British ship, and some vessels accordingly adopt the rule of having all foreigners with the exception of the officers. In this way, too, a lower uniform wage than prevails in the United Kingdom can sometimes be given without incurring jealousy and discontent. There is another advantage in this in certain trades. For instance, the Anchor Line and the Prince Line have boats trading backwards and forwards between New York and Italy, and only rarely returning to the United Kingdom. By carrying Italian crews they are able to discharge their men in Italy without incurring the responsibility of and expense of their repatriation. In view of the interest which the question of the employment of foreign seamen is exciting, notes on such circumstances as happen to come under individual notice in connection with the question may not be irrelevant in a Consular report."

The P. & O. Express Service steamers *Isis* and *Osiris*, running between Brindisi and Port Said, have Italian crews of deck and stokehold hands, presumably for the reasons as set forth by Consul Keene. When the steamers first went on the station they were tried under the ordinary crews that were shipped at home; but it was soon given up, owing to the old story. We were on board the *Isis* a few weeks ago, being shown round by the Commander. Steam was being raised with the intention of the boat leaving about three hours later, when the mail arrived. As we passed through the stokeholds all the firemen then on watch jumped up smartly and stood at attention until we passed through back again into the engine-room. We mention this on account of it being a most unusual occurrence on a merchant vessel. Regarding "State Protection for Seamen" the *Shipping Gazette and Lloyd's List*, November 22, 1901, gives an interesting and instructive account.

"A comparison between British and foreign legislation suggests that the countries have somewhat restricted notions as to the extent to which the sailor demands the protection of the State. German Shipping Law, for instance, contains no special provision as to the amount of space required for the accommodation of each seaman, although our own Merchant Shipping Act is very specific on that point, and even where a subsidy is paid by the German Government there is merely a general regulation to the effect that efficient and proper accommodation shall be provided for all the various members of the crew. In German law also, there are no provisions as to the sufficient manning of ships, and there is no compulsory load line, as in our case. French regulations are equally innocent of any stipulation with regard to the accommodation and treatment of crews, although it is stated that in the construction of ships the provisions of our Merchant Shipping Act in respect of accommodation are generally followed, and that as a matter of fact on most liners the crews have no reason for complaint in this regard. As to sailors' food, there are no regulations in existence, and by Ministerial decree entire liberty of contract exists between shipowners and seamen in this matter. There can hardly be a doubt that the British sailor is better off than the French sailor, especially on sailing vessels, where, despite the fact that the French are adepts in the matter of the cuisine, there is as a rule no provision whatever for cleanliness in the cooking or eating arrangements. In return for subsidies, there are no stipulations with regard to the accommodation and treatment of crews, but there are careful regulations as to their nationality. In the case of subsidised Italian ships, the Government is particular in insisting on the right to demand the dismissal of any member of the crew who is guilty of unseemly behaviour, uses bad language, or misconducts himself towards passengers, but the contracts made by the seamen with the shipowner as to pay, treatment, and general conditions of service are arrived at by

mutual consent, except where they are limited by the Mercantile Marine Code and regulations. It should be added, however, that there is, in the case of Italy, a provision as to the minimum strength of the crew, determined in the case of sailors before the mast by the carrying power of the vessel, and in the case of engineers by the registered horse power, while a subsidised company is also required to dress its crews in an approved uniform. From these details it is apparent that, with certain limited exceptions, there is considerable indifference to the personal welfare and comfort of seamen under ordinary conditions, and even where the right to dictate terms is acted upon in the case of subsidised ships it is in the main confined to a regulation of the nationality of the crews to be employed. When it is remembered that under the flags of each of the three countries mentioned the average rate of wages is substantially below the British standard, it is obvious that there are very good reasons why foreigners are so willing to serve under the red ensign. But while there is this lack of concern for the seamen even in the case of subsidised foreign ships, it is really surprising to what an extent, in the case of Germany, for instance, the State deems it right to in other respects control the ship, even in matters of minute detail. In the contract between the German Government and the Norddeutscher Lloyd Company there is a clause according to which all coal and provisions taken in at German, Belgian, and Dutch ports are to be of German origin. There is a similar regulation in the contract with the East Africa Steamship Company. Again, in the first-mentioned contract, it is laid down that the rates of freight and fares are to be fixed with, and cannot be changed without, the consent of the Imperial Chancellor, who may also prohibit the importation *via* German, Dutch, or Belgian ports of agricultural products competing with those of Germany. Again, it is directed that if the loading of German and foreign goods is notified at the same time the former are to have the preference. There is a provision whereby Norddeutscher Lloyd Company is to keep an account of the receipts and expenses of each subsidised vessel, and if after certain deductions have been written off there is a surplus in excess of 5 per cent., the German Government is to take half of it provided that there has been no surplus of less than 5 per cent. in previous years. On the other hand, it is apparently open to the Imperial Chancellor, should there be surplus profit of over 5 per cent. for three years, to take them out in the shape of increased services on the part of the company. In effect, therefore, the Imperial Chancellor may become a sort of part owner, with the right to inspect the books at any time, and to refuse his permission to any proposed sale of the line. Nearly all these provisions are reproduced in the contract with the East African Steamship Company, except that in this case the Imperial Chancellor can only demand an increased service if the surplus profits of the Company exceed 6 per cent. In each instance it is open to the Government to appoint an inspector, who may at any time travel in the Company's steamers at their expense. Thus it cannot be pretended that there would not be ample opportunity of

seeing that any regulations designed to promote the welfare of the crew were duly enforced if such regulations were in existence. The real truth is, that in Germany they regard a ship, whether subsidised or unsubsidised, as a means of extending trade, and the fact that in the attainment of that end the crew may be the subject of disability or discomfort is not regarded as a very material circumstance. In this country, on the other hand, we proceed to the other extreme. Our Merchant Shipping Act is conceived with a sublime indifference to the fact that we are, as Napoleon said, a nation of shopkeepers, whose very life depends on trade with people across the seas, but with a profound conviction that the seaman is a person who requires to be hedged about with State protection at every moment of his career, and now and again to be positively coddled."

In every social organisation the protection of the weak is one of the first duties of the State; this function, however, can be carried to extremes until the weakling—for whose special benefit and welfare it is exercised—is actually protected out of his occupation altogether. This appears to be what is happening now in the present time merchant service. Part 2 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, relates to masters and seamen. Commencing with section 110, it will be found to run almost steadily through to section 219 in the immediate interests of the seaman; covering everything possible (except providing for sending his mother to sea with him to nurse him); the last eight sections deal with protection of seamen from imposition. Sections 220 to 243 relate more particularly to discipline, some of which we have quoted before. Protection from imposition is really putting it on a bit thick, for the average sailor-man of to-day is a very wide-awake chap indeed, and is very much alive to all that he is entitled to, and is just about as keen in looking after himself and his interests as the next one, no matter whence he comes! If all this large number of enactments in the interest of the seafarer have been forced by the abuse of the affairs to which they relate, it shows clearly the vast difference under which the old-time sailor served in contrast to his brother of the present, for they were mostly enacted in times that are past, with a sublime indifference to the rapid changes immediately at hand. Most of these affairs came to pass in times when the sailor was a sailor, of particular and special training, whose place on a ship of those times could not be filled by any casual who happened to turn up for it. They are without doubt a distinct reflection on the manners or customs of the good old times, and a legacy of professional difficulty to men of the moment who are now responsible for the safe conduct and management of a ship under ever varying

conditions. That they have been enacted with the laudable or plausible intention of affording the most ample protection to a class that the State should ever be keen to cultivate may be taken for granted. How well they have succeeded must be judged by the rapid increase in the Lascar invasion plus the foreigner generally, who now exploits the British merchant ship in open competition with the men of native birth. Other times, other manners. It is not so long ago that the laws of the land provided for hanging the man who stole a sheep, and also other affairs which nowadays are considered very minor offences. Is the Merchant Shipping Act, then, to be likened unto the laws of the Medes and of the Persians that alter not? The times have changed, and with them the men. If the regeneration of the merchant service is a possibility of the immediate future, then the shipmaster, who is more than any other person responsible for its efficiency in so far as his own particular ship is concerned, must have proper support both from shipowners and from the State. At present they have not; consequently the most flagrant breaches of discipline are allowed to go unpunished and unchecked, owing entirely to such cases as do see the light being submitted for adjudication to those whose duty it is to administer the law, but who mostly fail in their duty to the State, owing to the general, erroneous idea that obtains that the poor hard wrought sailor is a person to be pitied and protected in every possible way. The moral effect of this on a service containing many thousands of men is very far-reaching, but the more immediate effect is to render the men concerned incapable of being handled satisfactorily, except in those ships where the conditions of employment are good and above the average; where the voyages are short and regular, such as in the mail services and liners generally; where the remedy for misconduct is a sure dismissal from the ship on arrival and from all similar vessels for ever after.

It may be taken for granted that the merchant service, as it is now, is not, nor can it possibly be, a nursery for the Royal Navy. Whether it be or not the proper recruiting ground for the Navy in time of war is a matter which the State will do well to consider now in the piping times of peace. That shipmasters, engineers, and more particularly marine superintendents, are a greater power for good or evil on the manning question than either conscription or subsidy—as we remarked some pages back—is a statement that must be taken with caution, inasmuch as the opinions of shipmasters and engineers are rarely—very rarely—enquired for by shipowners in matters

relating to the *personnel*. This is entirely a shipowners', or rather, ship managers', question, which they can deal with by the office staff, without soliciting opinions about it from those who go to sea. The marine superintendent is practically their nautical adviser, and he, perhaps more than any other person, decides on the fate of their affairs. The shipmaster and engineer also must be pliant or flexible enough to see as they see and to approve, or to get out and make room for those who will. That England expects of her shipmasters and chief engineers that they will prefer men of native birth wherever possible is a sentiment that will stand a good deal of discussing. What are the chief objections to the men of native birth when compared with the possibilities of the Lascar crew? Apparently and broadly stated it may be described as owing generally to their callous indifference to the contract they sign and engage themselves under, and an all too frequent violation of the terms of agreement, such as leaving the ship as they please in port; briefly, neglect of duty, desertion on the slightest pretence if anything is not exactly to their ideas of how things should be, their readiness to complain and knock off work on the most frivolous pretexts, their contemptuous, insolent, irritating and exasperating manner when reprovved or spoken to for anything that may require it, and the eternal try on to do as they please and boss the show, to say nothing of the use of foul language to their superiors, often experienced.*

The uncertainty of the men in the United Kingdom joining at the time appointed after being engaged in the usual way at the mercantile marine offices, making it necessary to have recourse to the "pier head jumper" to fill up the gaps of those who do not join as they should, may be attributed to section 224 (2) of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, which we repeat :

"If in the United Kingdom a seaman or apprentice to the sea service intends to absent himself from his ship or his duty, he may give notice of his intention, either to his owner or the master of the ship, not less than forty-eight hours before the time at which he ought to be on board his ship; and in the event of that notice being given, the court shall not exercise any of the powers conferred by this section for causing the offender to be conveyed on board his ship."

To this must be added, and given a front rank place, the constant desire for change of ship, and general or continuous restlessness, a voyage at most—sometimes only a passage

* July, 1903. The Board of Trade have recently adopted a further Regulation for maintaining discipline—No. 5. "Insolent or contemptuous language or behaviour to the master or officers, or disobedience to lawful commands, if not otherwise dealt with according to law—fine, 5s."

between two not very distant places—being sufficient time on any one vessel. It is the exception, and not the rule, for most men of these classes to make more than one voyage either before the mast or in the stokehold in the same ship. Some, as Consul Keene refers to, will never make more than a single passage in any vessel, and on arrival in port will leave her by hook or crook. As to giving notice to the master or owner of his intention to absent himself from his ship or duty not less than forty-eight hours before the time at which he ought to be on board at the time of joining, who ever had any experience of one taking the trouble to do so? They join or not as they please. The Board of Trade official or runner attends when the vessel leaves the dock or harbour to see if everybody turned up as they should do, inquires of the master or mate if there are any absentees, and is quite incapable of doing anything if half of them are missing. The “pier-head jumper” then finds his opportunity, and those who engaged but failed to join or give any account of themselves just go back and repeat the game without let or hindrance. Ships are not brought in port nowadays to stay for a few weeks on a stretch; keep them moving is the method of to-day. Thus discharging, loading, repairing, storing, and bunkering go on simultaneously. Sometimes crews are discharged and the new crew engaged forthwith to save two operations at the mercantile marine offices, and in many cases this occurs only forty-eight hours—quite often only twenty-four hours—before the time intended for the vessel to sail. That rank insubordination has been for years the curse of the merchant service is patent to everybody connected with it, and high hopes were entertained that with the adoption of the Continuous Discharge for Seamen about two years ago matters would mend in the right direction. The Board of Trade Committee’s report on this subject addressed to the Right Hon. C. T. Ritchie, M.P., etc., President of the Board of Trade, dated March 7, 1900, gives a brief though comprehensive history of discharges generally, and is contained in a series of twenty-nine sections. Section 27 states:

“We are not sanguine enough to think that a mere change in the form of the discharge certificate will effect any immediate or radical alteration in the character of merchant seamen; but while there is no doubt that the present form is unsatisfactory, there is reason to believe that a continuous form of certificate would go far to meet the views of those who have complained of the present form, and would tend, if properly supported by owners, masters and seamen, to raise the standard of discipline on merchant ships. Section twenty-two: we are aware that a system of this kind will not fully meet the views of all parties, and

that opinions for which we have great respect have been expressed that a system of continuous discharges cannot be completely successful unless supported by fresh legislation. Section twenty-eight: should the Board of Trade decide to issue the new form, it will rest with owners and masters to make it a success by seeing that the characters given in all cases are such as the seamen deserve, and that as time goes on no seaman, save under urgent or exceptional circumstances, is engaged on board a British ship without one of these continuous discharges."

Soon after the report was published the continuous discharge became an accomplished fact, at an estimated initial cost of about £1,800 (vide *Fairplay*, April 19, 1900), and now, after two years' experience, according to Mr. Consul Keene, masters are not all agreed upon any improvement due to the adoption of the new certificate. The chief object of the discharge is wasted entirely when they can be replaced new and clean at the mercantile marine offices at a mere nominal cost of a shilling.* This certainly was not contemplated when the report recommending the adoption of this particular form of discharge was drawn up. How comes it, then, that they are replaced so easily? It is just on a par with the endorsing of the character "if the seaman desires it." Most British shipmasters, in fact, all British shipmasters would, without a doubt, prefer to have their own countrymen for the crew of their ships at sea, if it were only possible to have them to do what they engage to do. In these materialist, competitive times we must take things as they are. This being so, the shipmaster follows the natural law and selects the easiest line of resistance in prosecuting his occupation, for life is all too short to have it worried and wasted away over people who will not stick to their obligations, even if they are his own countrymen. Time in port is all too short to have it spent in dancing attendance at shipping offices, police courts, or hospitals in worrying after people who make engagements and are quite callous about how they commence or carry them out, for other affairs of more importance demand his time and attention. It has been stated many a time and oft that the officer, in discussing the characteristics of a section of his own countrymen, and more particularly of those who belong to and have their being in the same service as himself, should be circumspect in his criticisms lest some of the objectionable remarks and unpalatable truths rub off the men and stick to the officer. That is a risk we take on lightly, for one cannot expect to handle fire or pitch without being burnt or soiled. The subject has

* A later Board of Trade arrangement would have put the cost of a new certificate (now 2s. 6d.) on the shipmaster.

a patriotic side, from which we have endeavoured to approach it to show that, unless something is done to arrest it, what was once a large body of British merchant seamen will soon be wiped off the face of the waters and become practically extinct. It may be, and probably is, quite true that what has been said of the men generally can only apply to a certain portion of them—that they, like all other large bodies of individuals, have their good and bad qualities. Granted that such is the case—and we feel that it is so—still the few bad eggs spoil the whole basket required in a ship. The good men find ready and constant employment in the mail services and liners generally, coasters, and the type of vessel beloved of W. W. Jacobs—such as are left of them—in his inimitable sea stories. The remainder find, or try to find, employment on vessels of the general trader class, and go off to places wherever the seven seas may lead to, with people of all nations for their shipmates and messmates; for to find a British ship with an entirely British crew is one of the things hardly possible in these times of free trade in sailors. The Board of Trade anticipate this, for the Articles in present use have a column with the caption “Nationality,” in place of what was formerly “Town or county where born,” in the detail of description of the person who engages. It is of vessels such as these that Mr. Consul Keene alludes to in his report, and these would be the crews that we would have to worry over if there were no Lascars to man the Eastern fleets. It has been suggested that shipmasters are a good deal to blame in the matter for the trouble that happens with their crews in port. This we deny, for it merely represents the opinion of those who see in the average shipmaster a very objectionable sort of person, who fails to make use of the powers he is supposed by statute to have, but is not firm enough to exercise. This is not the experience of those who go to sea for a living, who, when trouble occurs, must have recourse to the civil law to redress whatever happens, and who more often than not finds himself snubbed and sat upon for his pains.

Here we may ask why the regulations for maintaining discipline as sanctioned by the Board of Trade in pursuance of Section 114 (2) of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894 are to be carried out in the manner described and submitted for decision to the superintendent of the mercantile marine office before whom the crew will be discharged? We have four specific offences, the fine for each of which is five shillings. In the case of number three, a second and subsequent offences, it is ten shillings. The whole procedure is subversive of the best

interests of discipline, for what does a sailor care for a paltry five shillings when he has his "monkey up?" What does he care for the fact of being logged as required by the regulations, when he knows quite well that the matter does not end there? These affairs make such people more obdurate than ever.

Why, if the occasion requires it that an offender has been fined for some breach of discipline as intended in the regulations for maintaining it, is the shipmaster's action to be revoked at the instance of an official who may, or may not, be an impartial judge of the case on its merits? If these regulations are intended to give the shipmaster some power over his crew, then his action in the matter should be effective and final. Is it to be suggested that the average shipmaster is incapable of dealing with a case of discipline fairly, in such matters as carry against it a whole five shillings fine? Is he not fit to discriminate between the fair and the unfair, or could he only make use of it by abusing it? Or is it to be assumed that in disciplinary matters the Board of Trade is ever present in spirit during the voyage, and that therefore they alone are competent to deal with such momentous and weighty questions? The powers provided by statute are, perhaps, ample for the average shipmaster's requirements if he were only permitted to exercise them in a suitable way. There would likely be much less trouble on the whole, if these rowdy characters who disturb the peace and make for disorder wherever they go realised that the master of the ship they serve in is a person to be considered and respected as such, and that any dereliction of duty would be dealt with by him, and that the matter ended there. For the grosser offences, the law, properly administered by those whose duty it is to do so, is quite sufficient to maintain order in a service that has been hopelessly treated in the best interests of its own people in the days that are past.

A few weeks ago, at the Three Nuns Hotel, Aldgate, the leaders of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union foregathered for their annual dinner and meeting to discuss their affairs. Regarding the alleged falling off in the supply of British-born seamen and their intractableness, one of the speakers, in voicing the opinion of the meeting, openly declared that the cure for it all was to pay the men better, feed the men better, house the men better. There is nothing new in these utterances, for such has ever been the war cry of the Union from its earliest inception. If you want discipline, get British-born seamen, pay them well, and treat them well. There are plenty of them if you are prepared to pay the price, says an eminent critic of things nautical, while placidly suggesting

that the shipmaster should ever be to their faults a little blind, but to their virtues ever kind, as though consideration for them had never had a chance!

The three simple remedies suggested by the leaders of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union are matters held entirely in the hands of shipowners and ship managers, with which shipmasters have little or nothing whatever to do. There may be a few, but a very few, seagoing shipmasters who have a pecuniary interest in the vessels they sail. It is the exception rather than the rule. Modern ship management is quite opposed to that sort of thing, except perhaps in vessels of a certain class. Shipmasters cannot make terms for themselves; they take what is offered, and are thankful it is no worse. The ordinary law of supply and demand rules in this, as in other cases. Sailors and firemen, in demanding higher wages, must ever be mindful of that salutary law, and remember that steamers, considered as factories, are not stationary. They are constantly on the move, and, so far as the Eastern fleets are concerned, to where labour is comparatively plentiful and cheap. Pay the men better is easily disposed of. Feed the men better is quite another matter. Much depends upon the ability of the cook to do his business properly. More depends upon the material put on board by the ship manager before the voyage commences, together with his instructions to whosoever has the immediate control of the commissariat. In many fine vessels even this devolves upon the shipmaster, and he of all men is the white-haired boy who can manage to save sixpence off the bill for mutton chops, and show his skill for management and business aptitude in this direction, regardless of his strictly professional ability. "God sends the grub and the devil sends the cooks," is an old-time saying quite familiar to the average seafarer. Now that there is a possibility of shipping a cook who is a cook, there is room for hope that the demand of "Feed the men better" can be accomplished without putting shipowners to much further expense over it. The number of men to cook for is a point to be considered, so that the cook may have a chance to do his business decently and cleanly. Some of the galleys, with the cooking pots and pans provided, would almost make a decently able cook lose heart as soon as he makes acquaintance with the place provided for his operations. In those vessels contracted out for the feeding of the crew there is not much to hope for. Those are the exceptions that give the men the right to urge their protest. Most other vessels provide food that can only be described as being much better than the

crews of ships could afford to provide for themselves out of their earnings under circumstances of similar employment on shore. The provisions supplied to British ships are good, always good, and must be good, as they are shipped under surveillance of the law. Anything doubtful is promptly rejected. Some things might still be provided in a more liberal manner, so as to let the cook have more scope in preparing at least three good square meals a day, and thus justify the attempt to do away with the starvation form of pound and pint scale of provisions sanctioned by custom, which still appears on page 2 of the Articles and carries a note to explain itself.

“There is no scale fixed by the Board of Trade. The quantity and nature of the provisions are a matter for agreement between master and crew. The scale agreed upon is in addition to the lime and lemon juice and sugar, and other anti-scorbutics, in any case required by the Act.”

This old time scale and the latter day “Bill of Fare” form both appear on the same page of the Articles. The first is generally adopted and the latter left as blank as though it had never been. Many British ships from the United Kingdom have much leeway to make up before their arrangements for feeding the crew can approach anything like what is possible in similar vessels of the United States and of our own Australian and other Colonial ships, where the pound and pint for any portion of the crew is as yet unknown. Modern steamships are not a great number of days between port and port. There is no excuse for not having a full and sufficient supply of vegetables of the kind that will keep fairly well always on board. Feed the men better where they are not well fed is a matter for the responsible shipmanagers to consider how far it is worth their while to do so.

House the men better is a subject to be considered as resting entirely between shipbuilders and shipmanagers. Shipbuilders are ready enough to build anything they get the order for. Shipowners provide accommodation for the crew, at least sufficient to comply with the law as required by M.S.A., 1894, Section 210 (1).

“Every place in any British ship occupied by seamen or apprentices, and appropriated to their use, shall have for each of those seamen or apprentices a space of not less than seventy-two cubic feet, and of not less than twelve superficial feet measured on the deck or floor of the place, and shall be subject to the regulations in the sixth schedule to this Act, and those regulations shall have effect as part of

this section, and if any of the foregoing requirements of this section is not complied with in the case of any ship, the owner of the ship shall for each offence be liable to a fine not exceeding twenty pounds.

“(2) Every place so occupied and appropriated shall be kept free from goods and stores of any kind not being the personal property of the crew in use during the voyage, and if any such place is not so kept free the master shall forfeit and pay to each seaman or apprentice lodged in that place the sum of one shilling for each day during which, after complaint has been made to him by any two or more of the seamen as lodged, it is not so kept free.”

This, then, is the very least that the shipowner can provide. How it is accomplished may be judged by those who can never see for themselves by the following report on the subject, dated May, 1900, from the shipping master at Bombay to the Acting-Commissioner of Customs, Salt, Opium, and Abkari.

“ACCOMMODATION ON BOARD SHIP PROVIDED FOR SAILORS.

“In my report last year I alluded to this, and was directed to report any case meeting my eye in which the rules of the Board of Trade had been infringed, but I found none. Still, in visits of inspection my attention has occasionally been drawn to small partitioned-off spaces outside the forecabin with terribly sunheated iron bulkheads, and containing perhaps two bunks and room for a chest or so, but nothing else. On inquiry I have learned they were for the boatswain and carpenter, and I have most sincerely pitied the boatswain and carpenter, for the owners seem to have little consideration for them in tropical climates.

“What I cannot understand is that if a table and seats be considered necessary for the ship's officers in the cabin, why are they not so for others and for the forecabin hand ?

“The latter, I may say, has always to sit on his chest with his tin dish on his knees, after having helped himself to his portion of buffalo beef served up in another tin utensil, and supplemented by often doubtful biscuit with tea or coffee (such as it is) without milk, or a pannikin of water, as the meal might be.

“If he wishes for ‘luxuries,’ such as bread and butter, jam or fruit, he can get them from the bum-boatman—the ship won't supply them.

“It seems strange that no effort is made to improve the misery (I cannot say comfort) of the forecabin hand ; it seems to be nobody's business, but it *should* be the business of the shipowner ; and I feel certain that if the surroundings of the seaman on board the usual ‘tramp’ or sailing ship were less sordid a different state of affairs would exist between the master of a ship and his men. Ships vary a good deal in respect to both diet and accommodation, but in those where no margin is allowed beyond the Act of Parliament scale the men appear rather to enjoy a visit to the local gaol. Shipmasters have been

heard to declare that if they fed their men on toasted angels and provided them with free quarters in the 'milky way' they would not be satisfied, but this is going too far; food even half as good as the cabin would suffice, with some decent room they could sit in, protected somewhat from coal dust, engine-room heat, and other abominations. My remarks about food may be a digression, but I will finish the subject of accommodation by remarking that the troop deck in an ordinary transport has little to recommend it, but it is at least provided with certain conveniences. A ship's forecastle has nothing, and is often a disgrace to civilisation, and as also are the sleeping quarters sometimes allotted to officers and living rooms of petty officers in many vessels, though strictly fulfilling Board of Trade requirements for either a cold or hot climate.

"On shore princely palaces in the way of sailors' homes are in evidence, seamen's institutes, sailors' rests, etc., but seamen's dwelling places afloat are by no means open to the majority of people, so they remain practically as of old with, I respectfully submit, disastrous results. The men always want to get away from them."

In the general remarks of the same report the following statement occurs :

"In the year under report, the question was raised at home as to the space for Lascars on board ship being sufficient, and most officials connected with the mercantile marine and others were asked to report thereon, myself among the number. I may mention that in course of investigation I was on board the ss. *Orissa* of the British India Steam Navigation Co. and was much struck with her superior forecastle accommodation. The height of the forecastle is 6-ft. 10-in., and it measures up to 7,161 cubic ft., occupied by a crew of 80, which gives each man 18.1 superficial ft., 89.5 cubic ft., the space allotted by the Indian Merchant Shipping Bill of 1895, being respectively 6 and 36, and this is by no means a solitary case."

Thus, in a single official report, there is evidence of a most conflicting kind, regarding the important crew accommodation. Some of the observations are drawn from imaginary conditions as much as from real life, for the remark about the forecastle hand having always to sit on his chest with his tin dish, etc., is decidedly imaginary, for the European forecastle hand who patronises steamers of the tramp class does not as a rule possess such an article as a chest; he usually travels with a very light kit, contained sometimes in the usual bag. The chest may be found among those who stick to the sailing vessels, but for the steamer, the donkey* died its natural death when the Suez Canal—responsible for many changes at sea—became an accomplished fact. Steamers' forecastles, as well as those of

* Sea term for a sailor's chest.

sailing vessels, have for years been furnished with lockers or seats all round, with tables that shift upon stanchions, of the well known pattern.

What happens to these fixtures after a year or two, only those who have lived there can tell. Somehow they do not last like other parts of the vessel.

Walls of steel, decks of steel, roofs of steel, although they are sheathed with wood just in the wake of where people live—and sometimes die—do not permit much to be expected in the way of comfort from surroundings such as these when the climate is tropical. Unless there is a liberal supply of awnings the conditions are hellish in their nakedness. Oh! the dreadful steel decks, that will blister the naked feet after an hour's sun on a hot day; that never cool, even when the sun has gone until another morning! Too often there is not anything like a liberal supply of the very necessary awnings, the flimsiest apology or makeshift being commonly in evidence in cargo boats that could well afford to provide a proper outfit, such as those vessels that rarely leave the tropics *must* have. When the climate is wintry the conditions are then reversed with a severity that must be experienced to be appreciated, for it is not a joyful time for anyone.

When ships were built of wood, the lower forecabin for the accommodation of seamen was a fashionable institution. When iron became the material for shipbuilding the quarters for the crew were still to be found below the main deck, but much more often, as the ships increased in size, under the topgallant forecabin.

In this place appropriated to the crew was the windlass, the cables leading thence through the hawse pipes, which were rarely fitted with proper bucklers to keep out the rush of water when bucking into a head sea. Fine times and lively scenes were often enacted in such places, and if it is on account of such accommodation that the demand is made to "house the men better" there is perhaps a reason for it. Still it is a matter of doubt whether they are much better off in this respect in some of the modern small tramps, where cargo space is always the chief consideration. In the larger vessels the crew's quarters—the most modern arrangement is to accommodate them at the after part of the vessel—are generally all that is desirable; the lofty decks help to make it so. Shipbuilders who build vessels on speculation when orders are scarce provide the necessary accommodation, that is, the spaces, as required by law. Ship-managers when placing orders for new vessels may or may not leave the details of that kind to the builder. It is, however,

all clearly set out in the specification of the vessel which is to be built for purely commercial purposes, and competes on her own account with all comers as soon as her first cargo is safely under hatches. The shipbuilder and shipmanager may be and very likely are quite as humane as most people, even philanthropic at times; yet to expect them to give up the best commercial parts of a ship to provide more liberal accommodation for her crew does not come within the bounds of possibilities in these competitive times. Most vessels are disappointing in what they can actually carry compared to what they ought to. Somehow these affairs do not always peter out properly, the vessels are never large enough.

This being so, any hope for improvement in the accommodation for crews must necessarily be among the possibilities of the future for the ship designer to consider, together with, perhaps, a modification of the tonnage laws to meet the matter, or encourage it.

Much has happened since the year that gave the Suez Canal to the commercial world as a means of facilitating trade. While under construction—before its completion—there were those among our dearest friends who unctuously predicted that in the great canal Britain's much coveted supremacy as a sea carrier would soon find its grave. Statistics of the usual kind from that period up to the present time only serve to prove the wisdom of what some one has said, that it is not safe to prophesy unless you know, for nearly three out of every four vessels which have passed through the great waterway are British. The red ensign always has been and still remains a very easy first. From that time there has been quite a revolution in the methods of sea carrying, which the screw propeller has made possible, and which our perspicacious and dearest friends did not foresee in its proper relation to a country renowned for its coal and iron works. The transition from sail to steam, from wood to iron, and iron to steel has been most marked during the period under review. Of ships building twenty-five years ago half were sailing vessels. During the last ten years the tonnage of sailing vessels under the British flag has fallen from 2,400,000 tons to 1,600,600 tons. Last year 440 steam ships with a tonnage of nearly 1,400,000 were under construction in the United Kingdom; and only thirty-seven sailing vessels, with a total tonnage under 21,000, marks how small is the proportion of the old kind. Of the whole number built, twenty-two were wood, the others mainly steel.

Last year Lord Dudley, speaking in the House of Lords in his official capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of

Trade, stated that it was undoubtedly true that, in spite of the fact that the mercantile marine employed considerably more seamen than it did thirty years ago, the total number of British seamen was less by about 5,000 than it was at that time. The seagoing tendency of the nation, he said, was as great as ever, and that one in every sixty-eight males became a seaman, compared to one in sixty-seven of thirty years ago. The numbers in the Royal Navy had increased from 48,157 to 119,000 men in the course of that time. Thirty years ago the country was startled by the famous agitation of Mr. Samuel Plimsoll in his crusade against coffin ships. The same year saw the imprisonment of Captain Charles Barnes. This, though a mere incident in itself, marks perhaps more than any other event that occurred the attitude adopted by the authorities in discriminating against shipmasters in their endeavours to maintain their authority on the high seas, owing presumably to the excited state of public feeling over affairs which the public were not acquainted with, but took entirely on trust from those who were responsible for the remarkable agitation which ended by leaving its permanent mark as the load line on the sides of most British ships. From this time may be distinctly traced the sympathetic influence of those in authority with offenders against the simple regulations of the merchant ship, who they evidently considered could do no wrong, and were consequently much to be pitied and protected against all they were ever brought to account for. Twelve or thirteen years ago saw the formation of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union, which soon attained to a very considerable membership.

Associating as it did the workers of two distinct departments—generally considered a bit too antagonistic to be healthy—can only be considered unfortunate for those who had hitherto been free from the taint of trades unionism, those of the seaman's rating; for it identified them at once with the class who had ever been more troublesome at sea than any others, the firemen.

It may have been a happy inspiration of the promoters to combine the two forces for a common purpose in trades unionism, but it has not been the success they expected. It is not necessary to follow its inglorious career, though its pernicious influence is easily seen, as well as the real good it was the immediate cause of.

To its early paralysing influence must be ascribed the formation of the Shipping Federation, which soon followed the establishment of the Seamen's precious Union, and as that institution now embraces about nine-tenths of the total ton-

nage of the United Kingdom, it can and does offer very substantial benefits to those who enrol themselves under its patronage, the only condition being—we believe—that of faithful service as agreed upon when engaging and signing at the mercantile marine offices for service at sea. In 1871 we had, as before stated, 197,000 seamen in the merchant service, of whom 17,000 were foreigners. Ten years ago there were 22,052 foreigners and 21,322 Lascars employed in the same service. Last year the total numbers had increased to 247,448, including 36,023 Lascars and 36,893 foreigners. If these figures are correct, they show that in 1871 about 5,500 more men of native birth were employed under the red ensign than in 1901. The large increase in the total numbers during the thirty years of nearly 50,500 men is made up by the increased numbers of Lascars and foreigners, to which must be added the 5,500 less Britishers, showing an increase of about 56,000 of these two kinds. It is probably very much higher. Ten years ago there were over 700 more foreigners than Lascars. Last year there were nearly 900 more foreigners than Lascars.* Thirty years ago 48,157 men were sufficient for the needs of the Royal Navy. Last year the *personnel* of the Navy was 119,000 with a shortage in the stokehold ratings. Thirty-three years ago the School Boards became established in England. There are not wanting those who would see in this one of the causes that have led to a falling off in the numbers of British born merchant seamen. In this period the conditions of life at sea and the work at sea have changed entirely, while most other channels of suitable employment on shore have changed too, in the interest of the worker. Thus the shipping industry comes off badly in competition with employment on shore. At all events we must recognise the want of attraction to lads possessed of decent education to a life in the merchant service, where, either before the mast or in the stokehold, there is little or nothing for them to do beyond drudgery, mostly of the dirtiest possible kind. The coal shovel and chipping hammer are not exactly tools to get romantic over, therefore large numbers of men after a few years, sometimes only months, find other ways or means of getting a living. There is always a feverish desire to get work ashore. In all the principal seaports of the world there are Britishers planted firmly and creditably, who have figured at one time or another in the British merchant ship. At home many of the best of the merchant seamen may be found in the various fire brigades,

* The latest report varies these figures, showing an increase in the number of Lascars.

salvage corps, railway services, stevedoring, and in all sorts of places where a handy man is useful. Without going into the question of climates that are sultry, which make objectionable work more objectionable still by reason of its exhausting effects on the person, what really is to be expected when ships are what they are, and the work as we describe it? In these times the attractions for a sea life are all in favour of the Royal Navy, where the system of training from the time of joining produces a very different seaman from the same kind of material to start work with that goes to the merchant ship, where there is no training to be had worth the name; where every ship and every shipmaster is different from the next. Life in the Royal Navy may not be exactly all of the beer and skittles order, as viewed from the point of the seaman or the fireman. They are infinitely better off than their brother who ekes out a precarious life in the merchant ship, for their service is continuous; their earnings, if less per month, will probably be greater at the end of the year, to say nothing of the greatest of attractions, the pension when the service is ended. If the merchant seaman is better off as regards food than his brother in the Navy, it may be a point in compensation. Considering, however, the merchant seamen's demand of "Feed the men better" and the recent re-arranging of affairs for feeding the men in the Navy, there may not be so great a difference as some would expect. The only point to attract a well-educated lad to a life in the merchant service as a seaman is the possibility of attaining to the dignity of a command, after years of strenuous effort, when he will take what is offered him, and be thankful for small mercies, for so easy is the road to become a certificated shipmaster, and so keen the competition for the command of every ship.

The great Napoleon is said to have once remarked that every soldier of his army carried in his knapsack a Marshal's bâton.

You cannot allure the boys of Great Britain to a life on the ocean wave in the merchant service with the inducement of a title being stowed away in the sailor boy's bag. Commerce, generally, is well in evidence when these are being shelled out. Those to adorn the merchant service cannot get past the ship-manager's chair. They never go seaward.

British seamen for British ships is a very proper sentiment, and he who will take on the task to bring it about will deserve well of his country. There are many things to consider in affairs of such magnitude. If there has been a falling off in the numbers of the native born in the merchant service during the last few years, there is a *quid pro quo* in the increase of the Navy's *personnel*, which is really out of all proportion to it.

To reconcile the shipmanagers' dictum that they are not concerned in nationality, all that they require is that the men shall be at once cheap and efficient, and that sufficient are available, to the demand of men, pay the men better, feed the men better, house the men better, is a task which no one would dare to take on single-handed with hope of success, be he never so doughty a champion. The times are keenly competitive and progressive, and here, as well as in other paths in life, men must warrant their existence. That the Lascar has thoroughly and amply justified his mission in the present day British merchant vessel cannot be denied by anyone competent to judge of the matter, unless sentiment is permitted to override the practical side of the question that is not merely national, but Imperial.

In response to the Parliamentary pressure exerted by Sir Mancherjee Bhownaggee, M.P., the President of the Board of Trade invited Mr. Darasha R. Chichgar, the chief representative of a family of licensed shipping brokers of the Bombay Shipping Office, to come to England at the public expense to give evidence before the committee sitting under the presidency of Sir Francis Jeune, on behalf of the Lascars.

At a great mass meeting held in Bombay a few days before the Lascar's envoy embarked for England they requested him to say that all they asked was that the justice of non-interference might be done to them, and as loyal and contented British subjects they might be left to earn their living as heretofore. They had petitioned Parliament not to give legislative sanction to proposals the indirect effect of which would be to expel them from British ships, thus depriving them of an occupation for which they are eminently fitted by birth and training. Soon after the envoy's arrival in England he appeared before the Manning Committee and had an innings of five or six hours in the witness chair on the first occasion.

Pressed by Mr. J. H. Wilson, of the Seamen's Union, to draw general comparisons between the Lascars and the British seamen, unfavourable to the latter, the wily Mr. Wilson did not get much change out of the astute Parsee, who said he had not gone there to say anything derogatory to British sailors; his duty was to uphold the right of the Lascars to follow the calling to which they had been trained for generations, and for which they were physically well fitted.

Mr. Chichgar even urged that, so far from it being desirable in the interests of our naval defences to restrict the employment of Lascars they should be looked upon as forming the raw material for a most useful, as well as numerous, body of supplementary

reservists. He suggested that steps should be taken to train Lascars in their respective ships to naval ways as far as was possible with the appliances of the merchant vessel, the tuition being given by the officers of the Royal Naval Reserve. The witness believed that a Lascar reserve would prove a most valuable auxiliary of the naval service, not only for guarding the shores of India, but also for Colonial defence.

The men are quick to learn, and under European officers would soon be qualified for the reserve list. Who will gainsay this with the imposing native Indian Army of 150,000 men of the finest possible fighting material as a criterion? The men of the Indian Army are recruited from all over India, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. The Lascar, we maintain, is recruited from the same places, and is of the self-same races. Whether the Lascars will ever be formed into a reserve or not time will prove. In the meantime, if the needs of the Navy require a larger supply of firemen than can be attracted to the service by ordinary methods, and if our next conflict is to be in the Persian Gulf, as those who pretend to know say it will, then it will be well for those in power to consider the possibilities of the Punjabi for such service where the men before the furnace will dominate the actions of the man behind the gun to a very considerable degree.

The employment of Lascars in the merchant service will, in the future, be greater than ever, the securing of this class of labour being merely a matter of opportunity for those ships that frequent the ports where they can be engaged. If there were places nearer the home ports than afar off Bombay actually is, there would be a general rush to secure them for crews in vessels that now have to be exploited by the foreigner, with only a few men of native birth among them to make up the ordinary type of European crew that the British vessel depends upon.

The Board of Trade have agreed to modify the regulations which prohibited the employment of Lascars in vessels going further North than Chesapeake Bay, that is, about the latitude 38° N., and extend the limit 5° to latitude 43° N., so as to include the port of Boston, on condition that in the steamers plying to the east coast of America the men's quarters are provided with suitable heating accommodation, and that warm clothes are found them.

This arrangement in favour of Lascars cannot be expected to give unqualified approval to the leaders of the Seamen's Union and other agitators who urge that the employment of Lascars prevents the European seaman from earning the wages

he would like to have. It will probably have a direct effect upon their membership which will not be to their benefit, as time may show. Any alteration of the Lascar's terms of agreement, as in this case, where it has always till now been stipulated "that the said crew (Lascars) shall not be bound to serve on voyages to any port in the Baltic, or any port on the east coast of America north of 38 deg. N. lat.," would be certain of provoking much criticism in the Press, and the *Syren and Shipping* of September 10, 1902, in commenting upon it in reference to what had appeared in the *Morning Leader* in its "World's Work" column about the British sailor and the Lascar, says:

"Another step (we read) towards the extinction of the British sailor has been taken"; and then we are told of permission being given for the extension of the limit of the employment of Lascars so as to include Boston, provided that the men are supplied with warm clothes and quarters. It is difficult to see how this can be construed into 'another step towards the extinction of the British sailor.' It seems to us that the extension is really tending the other way about. The owners of Lascar-manned vessels desire to send their steamers from the East to Boston; in this way a new destination, an expansion of their trade is secured. If they were not granted the liberty they seek they would simply lose the trade, with the result that British capital and British seamen—for these vessels do carry others than Asiatics—would miss certain employment. Again, why the outcry against the Lascar, a British subject? Why put him in the same category as the Dago, whom we should like to see driven from every British ship, even as we should like to see a goodly number of their brethren driven from shore employment with us whom they hate, but whose purse they covet?"

Quite so! Common fairness to India demands that the Lascar shall receive different consideration in the matter to the deserters from foreign flags who abound in the British merchant service to-day, even though we have not men of native birth to fill—except on their own terms—the places the foreigner occupies as readily.

Some of the large shipping deals that have been brought about lately may be safely expected to be the means of bringing the Lascar more in evidence than ever, for the astute commercial men who control these groups of what were formerly several distinct lines, will not be slow to make full use of the advantages possible with the Lascar-manned steamer. With their usual acumen in ordinary business affairs, the marked difference will be too palpable for them to neglect, for the ordinary terms on which Lascars are engaged make it both as possible and probable, unless free trade in sailors should be made a thing of the past.

From the shipmasters', officers', and engineers' point of view, the one redeeming feature of the merchant service is the excellent discipline that prevails where Lascars are carried.

Why shipowners should be expected to forego the advantages thus afforded them of more suitable servants at a less actual cost than the European who takes on similar work is one of the things, in the words of Lord Dundreary, "No fellah can understand."

In the endeavour to deal with this subject, we have had to make use of lengthy extracts from newspapers, magazines—mostly devoted to shipping—regulations, and matter from various sources incidental to as large a question, chiefly of events that have happened during the last two or three years, but does not by any means represent all that has occurred.

The consular reports are quite authentic, even if any of the other matter should be considered by some as not above suspicion. In regard to this, the recent action of the authorities in the port of Alexandria will be found of special interest, although we believe that up till now it has not appeared in any report, or in any of the home papers. It tells its own story.

At all the Customs' gates or landing places in the port of Alexandria the following notice is posted up, so that he who runs may read. It is copied verbatim from the notice at Gate No. 6 :

"24/9/1902.

"From to-day inclusive no officers or members of a crew of any British ship in the Port will be allowed to leave by any of the Custom gates between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. daily unless in possession of a permit as per accompanying.

"It will be seen, on reference to the footnote on permits, that officers will only show their permits, whereas sailors or firemen will hand theirs in on going out.

"Permits collected by gate guards at gates other than those next to a section office will be dealt with as follows: Those collected by day guards will be handed in to their respective section office on completion of duty. Night guards will hand in those in their possession to the officer or N. C. O. who inspects their posts between 6 and 7 a.m. The officer or N. C. O. on duty at section I., II., III., and S.S. IV., will be responsible for the checking of officers' permits and the collecting of permits in possession of sailors leaving by gates 6, 14, 18 and 28 inclusive. All permits collected will be handed to the Inspector at daily by 8.30 a.m. (*sic*).

"*The greatest possible care must be taken not to stop the exit of sailors of other nationalities.*

"The Inspector, C. S. RANDALL."

As this is a most unique and exceptional method of dealing with crews in port we felt interested in the matter. It was our first acquaintance with the old Egyptian port; the exceptional and differential treatment of the British seamen was sufficient excuse for anyone interested to make enquiries. We called at the British Consulate for the purpose, and had a short interview with Mr. E. B. Gould, the Consul-General for Egypt, and learned, as expected, that the order emanated from that establishment; that it was the revival of an old rule of the Port, and that it had been resuscitated at the instance of the Consul-General in response to frequent and urgent requests of the Masters of the British ships that frequented the port, to put a stop to the "come and go as you please style" that obtains whenever a vessel gets tied up to a quay or a wharf; not merely in that port, but any other, and which makes one of the usual terms of agreement common on the articles of British vessels, "no liberty granted abroad other than at the pleasure of the master," quite a farce. This salutary regulation has, we are informed, effected a considerable improvement in general discipline on the British ships in the port, as exemplified in the lesser work at the Consulate. Shipmasters are requested, even if it subjects them to a little personal inconvenience occasionally, to recognise and support the movement that has been adopted entirely in the interests of discipline on British ships.

The permit is simply a coloured card provided by the manager of the Sailors' Home. It carries the name of the vessel, the name of the bearer, and is signed by the master. Without one of these, no person passes the gates during the time specified.

Regarding the footnote of the notice to the effect that "The greatest possible care must be taken not to stop the exit of sailors of other nationalities," it appears that the altered conditions are so much appreciated that other foreign consuls are expected shortly to adopt and institute similar instructions to the authorities regarding the vessels they are concerned with, France being highly probable as the first to act in following suit, from which it would appear as though trouble with crews in port is not confined to the British ships only.

A measure has become law in France, in virtue of which the Minister of Marine is empowered to grant diplomas of honour and silver medals to seamen who have followed their avocations for twenty-five years, provided that they enjoy civil and political rights, and that their good service has been recognised. The men to receive this mark of distinction will

be nominated to the minister by the naval prefects. The President of the Republic may issue the same reward for good service to any seaman, without reference to length of employment, who has done specially creditable work. What does Great Britain intend to do for her merchant service, and her men of the merchant service? Something must be done in the very near future, if there is any real intention to stop the places of the man before the mast or in the stokehold from being filled entirely by the Lascar, the Chinaman, or other foreigner.

The events of the last twenty or thirty years prove that the working machinery, as it is, does not make for the selection of men of native birth in preference to others. Discipline at sea, governed on shore by people who have not perhaps the first qualification for acting in the matter, beyond being the person to whom it must be submitted, is not merely a farce, but really disastrous to the British seagoing community. Whatever attempt at reform is made in the matter of food, wages and accommodation, these must from their very nature remain, as they always have been, in the hands of the employers.

Inducement must be made to give shipmasters some real and effective control over the men they engage to work with themselves for a common purpose—the successful prosecution of the work where the ship finds employment. Plenary powers are not merely requested, they are certainly required. The official log-book and the civilian, as an effective institution in the best interests of our seafarers is, we respectfully submit, a disastrous failure.

For a country like Great Britain really is, depending entirely on her merchant ships, it is not too much to expect that special privileges should be extended to the workers in it, considering the exceptional character of their work when compared with other channels of employment on shore, and in which, according to Lord Dudley, the shipping industry comes off very badly.

What is the outlook for the able-bodied seaman or the marine fireman, when he attains the state we must all come to, when he is no longer physically fitted to earn his bread?

This is one of the many things in which we “muddle through somehow,” and leave everything to chance. It has been said many a time and oft that a pension scheme for the merchant service is beyond the scope of practical politics.

This statement we are not content to accept, for if it be possible to pension men of the Navy and Army, to say nothing of private concerns and corporations that do it successfully,

there really ought to be no insuperable difficulty in dealing with a scheme for the men of the merchant service. All payments of wages are made before properly appointed Government officials, and much more besides which tends to bring the service within the range of those considered public, although the actual earnings have to be privately provided. Given the opportunity to one of the many first-class insurance societies, a scheme would doubtless soon be evolved and made practically workable even if the State will not deal with it. That we are not alone in this opinion is patent from the following article on the subject which appeared in the *Journal of Commerce* of September 6, 1902, which we take the liberty of quoting in full, for it merits every chance of publicity,

“The question of old age pensions for seamen is one which has been brought forward on many occasions, and each time has had to pass into oblivion because of the lack of interest and support in the matter. Taken separately, pensions for mariners do not appear to have much of a chance, if we may take the attitude of the Crown Ministers to mean anything at all. There is always a difficulty in obtaining special treatment by a Government for any particular class of the community, and it must be very clearly shown that the claims for such are of a nature to warrant preferential treatment. It is doubtful if aged seamen can lay any legal claim to be classified as having a first claim upon the consideration of the nation; but they have an undoubted moral claim for material help in their declining years. For the nation as a whole, it is true that of all the problems legislators, political economists, philanthropists and recognised representatives of the working classes have to solve, none offers greater difficulties or calls forth more diverse opinions than that of old age pensions.

“But in the case of seamen the matter is simplified somewhat by the nature of their employment, and the official channels through which payment is made for their services.

“Thus, seamen ship before a Government servant, and are also discharged and paid before the same. The Government, through the Board of Trade Department, is the seaman’s sponsor, to whom all questions relating to his employment and settlement may be submitted.

“Thus, seamen are continually under the supervision, so to speak, of the Government; their careers, therefore, from beginning to end, may be traced. In that way, some of the difficulties pertaining to the ordinary workman are removed, for no just system of pension would allow the vicious needy the same advantages as those whose necessity was due to no fault of their own. Discrimination to the same extent would not, therefore, be required. Then, again, as to the finding of the funds, seamen would be in a better position, because provision could be made for them at comparatively small cost.

“To pension every man and woman according to Mr. Charles Booth’s scheme, which provides five shillings a week for every man and woman over the age of sixty-five years, would involve an annual

outlay of from thirty to forty millions of money. An almost infinitesimal proportion of that would suffice to keep aged seamen and their wives and widows out of the workhouse, and, taking into consideration the value of their services to the Empire, the hazardous nature of their occupation, and the comparative lowness of their remuneration, it is as little as a benefited country can do to make their latter days secure from grinding poverty and the workhouse blight.

“Undoubtedly the investment of deceased seamen’s unclaimed wages and the proceeds of their effects left in the hands of the Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen would make a nucleus for a pension fund.

“There is also much in the argument put forward by a correspondent, whose letter upon the subject appears elsewhere to-day, to take the present surplus between receipts and expenditure of the light dues account for the benefit of aged seamen, and thus a sum equal to nearly two and a half millions of money would be available, although there is little doubt entertained in some quarters that ere long this light dues imposition will be either abolished or, at least, modified.

“Then, with the machinery now existing, and very little more labour—certainly no more than would occupy just a little of the time of the officials at the mercantile marine offices, now busily employed in the noble process of twiddling their thumbs—a small sum could be collected from seamen when paying off, which would go towards the fund, and so remove the slight taint of charity that might otherwise attach to a State pension—though, by the way, Government and municipal officials accept their pensions without apparently the slightest qualm of conscience, and they are far better situated to provide competencies of their own than Jack is even to pay a trifle to a pension fund.

“That a pension should be the eventual reward of a British seaman no right-minded man will deny, and that it should be distinct from any scheme undertaken by the State for the general community will also be admitted.

“It is, therefore, a question of how long will the matter be allowed to remain in abeyance to the detriment of the mercantile marine and of the nation at large, for, with the uncertainty now attaching to a nautical career, no inducement offers to youths to take it up, whereas the promise of an old age pension after, say, fifteen or twenty years of sea service, with clean records, would bring lots of seamen to our fore-castles, *and ensure their conduct whilst there.* (The italics are not in the original.) The pension earned would, of course, be payable only in the event of a specified age being attained, or earlier in the case of incapacity.”

At the Guildhall banquet the other day, Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster, M.P., replying for the Navy to the toast of “The Naval and Military Forces of the Empire,” said he would ask them to believe that the Admiralty was aware of its responsibilities, and was endeavouring to fulfil them. The active service list of the Navy at the present time amounted to no

fewer than 123,000 men—a formidable total. The Admiralty was now engaged in furnishing a reserve which would be ample not only in regard to one branch, but all branches of the service. The question of numbers was important, but still more important was the preservation of that spirit which had always animated the officers and men who served the King upon the sea. Changes there must be, but the Admiralty recognised that any change which did not acknowledge the necessity of maintaining in its full vigour the spirit and traditions of the Navy would be a change for the worse. In eighteen short months the *personnel* of the Royal Navy had increased by four thousand men. This serves to illustrate aptly the truth of Lord Dudley's remark that the seagoing tendency of the nation is as great as ever.

Not only 36,000 or 37,000, but nearer 100,000 Lascars at the present time find means of existence by working as seamen, firemen, and domestics in the British merchant vessel. The actual number of foreigners as well who exploit the British ship will probably never be accurately known, but 36,000 or 37,000 will not represent them all, inasmuch as many are always waiting the chance to ship, in crowds, at most of the home ports.

Why should Sir Thomas Sutherland be able to state with truth that without Lascars it would be impossible to maintain the P. & O. services with anything like their usual regularity and precision, when our country, teeming as it is usually with unemployed and suitable men and boys, could easily and readily supply all that is necessary if they were attracted to it by ways or means different from the past, and made possible by alterations of, or even a rigid or sensible enforcement of, the farcical laws and regulations that now obtain?

The conditions of sea life have changed entirely from when the works were outside and above the vessel, and men of special training, skill and courage were absolutely necessary to work her properly and profitably. Changes there must be in the merchant ships as well as in those of the Royal Navy, and unless that change is made to give to the British shipmaster the moral and material support so necessary in dealing with large numbers of men, as the present conditions require, then there is not much hope that the native born seaman will displace the Lascar so easily as we might well wish, for the discipline of the Lascarmed steamer is an object lesson our legislators, magistrates, and others who are responsible for administering the law for maintaining discipline in the merchant vessel might do well to give their attention to, and to study the question closely for the benefit of our countrymen.

APPENDIX.

The report of the Committee appointed by the Board of Trade to inquire into certain questions affecting the Mercantile Marine has been issued. The following is the full text of the document :

MINUTE OF APPOINTMENT.

At the Council Chamber, Whitehall, this thirteenth day of January, 1902.

Present :

The Right Hon. Gerald William Balfour, M.P.

The Board of Trade are pleased to appoint the following gentlemen, viz. :

The Right Hon. Sir Francis Jeune, K.C.B. (Chairman)

Mr. W. F. G. Anderson

Captain H. Acton-Blake

Mr. Thomas Burt, M.P.

Captain A. J. G. Chalmers

Colonel John M. Denny, M.P.

Mr. Walter J. Howell

Vice-Admiral R. M. Lloyd, C.B.

Mr. W. Milburn, jun.

Mr. J. Havelock Wilson

to be a Committee to inquire into and report upon the following matters :

(1) The causes that have led to the employment of a large and increasing proportion of Lascars and foreigners in the British merchant service, and the effect of such employment upon the reserve of seamen of British nationality available for naval purposes in time of peace or war ;

(2) The sufficiency or otherwise of the existing law and practice for securing proper food, accommodation, medical attention, and reasonable conditions of comfort and well-being for seamen on British merchant ships ;

(3) The prevalence of desertion and other offences against discipline in the mercantile marine ;

And to make such recommendations with respect to these matters as they may think fit.

The Board of Trade are further pleased to appoint Mr. G. E. Baker to be secretary to the said Committee.

(Signed) G. W. BALFOUR.

REPORT.

To the Right Hon. G. W. BALFOUR, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.

SIR,—In accordance with your minute, dated Jan. 18, 1902, we have considered the various questions into which we were appointed to inquire, and we have the honour to report as follows :

1. We have been anxious to obtain the views of persons of practical experience, especially of the leading officials of the Board of Trade and of

qualified representatives of all the interests affected. We have examined at considerable length a very large number of witnesses—seventy-nine in all—during the forty-one days we have sat, and we hope we have been fortunate enough to obtain a body of highly valuable evidence.

(i.)

2. There is no doubt of the fact of the increase of foreigners employed and corresponding decrease of British seamen employed in the mercantile marine.

3. The statistics of the Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen, obtained in the manner explained in Question 12,065, show that in 1888 there were employed on British merchant vessels 158,959 British and 24,990 foreign seamen; in 1901 the numbers were 151,876 and 37,174 respectively—a decrease of 7,583 British, and an increase of 12,184 foreign seamen in thirteen years.* (*Appendix M, No. 1.*)

4. According to a table handed in by the Registrar-General (*Appendix M, No. 9*), based on a census taken on March 31, 1901, there were then employed on British merchant vessels 120,412 British and 32,614 foreign seamen. These figures are shown in detail in the return published as a Parliamentary Return (*Cd. 1,342*) in 1902, which also shows that when a similar census was taken on March 25, 1896, there were 125,009 British and 27,446 foreign seamen; thus in the quinquennial period the decrease in the number of British seamen amounted to 4,597, and the increase in the number of foreign seamen amounted to 5,168.

5. Coincident with the diminution in the number of British seamen and the increase in the number of foreign seamen employed, there has been a very considerable increase in the number of Lascars (natives of India), and other Asiatic seamen employed on British merchant vessels. The number of Asiatics on Asiatic articles of agreement is shown as 18,427 in 1888, and as 37,481 in 1901 (*Appendix M, No. 1*); in the census of March 31, 1901, 33,610 Lascars (including all Asiatics on Asiatic articles of agreement) were enumerated as compared with 27,911 in the census of March 25, 1896.

6. Although Lascars and other Asiatics are employed almost exclusively on steam vessels, they now exceed the total number of foreign seamen employed in all classes of British ships, and their increase during recent years has been very much more rapid than the decrease of British or the increase of foreign seamen employed.

7. Full particulars of the comparative numbers of British and foreign seamen and Lascars and other Asiatics employed in the various ratings in all classes of vessels are shown in the tables handed in by the Registrar-General, together with illustrative diagrams (*Appendix M, Nos. 1-13*), and in the Parliamentary Return referred to.

8. It is to be observed that the growth of the mercantile marine has been very great, and that the proportion of British seamen to the total mass of the population is still high; if the total number of men on the active list of the Royal Navy (excluding marines) be added to the total number of British merchant seamen and fishermen; it will be found that one in every thirty-six of the males over fifteen years of age in the United Kingdom is a seaman or fisherman (*Question 12,246*).

9. A statement handed in by Vice-Admiral R. M. Lloyd shows that the proportion absorbed by the Royal Navy has increased very considerably in recent years (*Appendix E, No. 1*), and this increase possibly affects to some extent the number entering the mercantile marine.

10. Various causes have been assigned for the decrease in the number of British seamen in the mercantile marine, but we do not doubt that the main

* These figures include officers in all cases, there being very few foreign officers.

cause is the superior attractiveness of shore employment, with its greater comforts and superior facilities for the maintenance of a home.

11. As regards the increasing employment of foreign seamen, we do not think, speaking generally, that they are preferred on account of cheapness. The rates of wages at home ports are usually the same for British and for foreign seamen alike, but possibly crews largely or wholly foreign are sometimes taken at foreign ports, partly because wages are lower there, e.g. Hamburg and Antwerp. It may also be observed that British vessels which habitually trade between the ports of foreign countries frequently recruit their crews from the foreign seamen available for employment at such foreign ports. The superior contentment and docility of foreign seamen, certainly in the earlier stages of their employment in British ships, render masters and owners willing to take them. It is, however, satisfactory to find that no competent authority alleges that the foreigner is a better seaman than the British subject, especially at times of danger.

12. From evidence given by various witnesses it appears that a certain number of the foreign seamen employed on British ships have acquired homes at seaports in the United Kingdom, and have become in this way British citizens. We think it would be a valued privilege for these men, and for others who intend to serve for lengthened periods in the British mercantile marine, if all seamen who have served for a substantial time, perhaps four years, on board British merchant ships, and acquired an adequate knowledge of the English language, were entitled by an easy process, without expense, to become British subjects by naturalisation.

18. Lascars and other Asiatics who are British subjects stand on a different footing from foreigners. Through the kind assistance of Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree, M.P., who himself attended as a witness, we have been able to obtain the evidence of a shipping agent of Bombay and of several Lascars employed in British ships.

14. We think that, in addition to their claim as British subjects, they have also some claim to employment, because British vessels have displaced the native trading vessels. Lascars are in most cases hereditary sailors, and have special qualifications for work as firemen in hot climates. They are temperate, and those who came before us made a most favourable impression upon us. The evidence shows that they make most amenable and contented crews. In consequence their employment as firemen has grown almost universal in the tropics, and they are also largely employed in vessels trading between ports within the tropics and the United Kingdom.

15. They are so contented and so anxious to retain their situations in British ships that it is not easy to be sure whether that service entails any hardship on them. We believe, however, that there is no reason to think that many of them do, in any appreciable degree, suffer when employed in the colder climates to the north of the Suez Canal, or even in the Atlantic trade. We do not, however, feel competent to express any decided opinion on their employment in men-of-war, but we have no doubt of their desire to be so employed, or of their competency, at least in the capacity of stokers and firemen. We may add that those whom we saw belonged for the most part to the northern and warlike races of India, and they certainly impressed us with their manly character.

16. On the whole, we feel that the objections which may be felt as to the employment of foreign seamen do not apply to the employment of Lascars and other Asiatics who are British subjects.

17. We ask ourselves the question—Is there any objection to be felt or apprehension entertained in view of the undoubted increase of foreign seamen in the mercantile marine?

18. There are two points of view (1) that of the shipowners and their trade; (2) that of the Admiralty and the exigencies of the naval service.

(1) As regards the shipping trade, it appears to us that there is no apprehension to be felt in time of peace. The trade is efficiently carried on, and there is no reason to suppose that the supply of foreign seamen available will run short. There appears to be no more real danger of scarcity of men in the event of a naval war. It is doubtful if even the subjects of the State with which we might be at war would desert their calling, and even so, the foreign seamen employed are of so many different nationalities that the supply would still be sufficient. It is worthy of notice that Swedes are the most numerous of all the foreign seamen employed on the 31st March, 1901, and that the Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes together amounted to more than one-third of the total number of foreigners employed [*Parliamentary Return of 1902, Cd. 1,342, Table 4.*] It is probable also that some ships of the mercantile marine would necessarily be laid up in time of war, and their crews added to the number of men available for employment; and if freights and wages rose the effect would be to draw men from shore into sea employment.

(2) As regards the naval service, the Committee appointed in 1902 to consider the question of naval reserves reported as follows with reference to the mercantile marine as a source of supply:

“In considering the extent to which the Navy should depend upon the mercantile marine, it has to be borne in mind that it is undesirable to draw too largely upon it for a reserve.

“One of the objects of a strong navy is to enable our merchant ships to keep the sea in time of war, and this object would be defeated if too many seamen and firemen were suddenly withdrawn from the mercantile marine, and a considerable portion of it laid up in consequence for want of crews. Under present conditions the Navy cannot be dependent for a reserve mainly upon this source, unless the mercantile marine becomes practically a State-subsidised and State-regulated service; and even if this were done it would be necessary to provide a reserve for the mercantile marine to enable oversea trade to be carried on in time of war.

“The mercantile marine is, and should continue to be, a valuable source from which to draw a portion of the Naval Reserve. The Committee feel that the numbers which at present come from this source may and should be increased; they desire to encourage the entry of men from it into the Naval Reserve, and to stimulate future enrolment; but the present reserve is already drawn largely from other sources, and this must be still more the case with the larger reserves required in the near future.” [*Parliamentary Return of 1908, Cd. 1,491, paragraphs 16, 17, 18.*]

19. It seems to us unlikely that in the event of any great naval war it would be practicable to draw men to any considerable extent from the crews of the sea-going vessels of the mercantile marine. At present the great mass of naval reserve men come from the fisherman and yachtsman class, and from the seamen on coasting vessels, and in case of war it is upon these classes that reliance must mainly be placed. (*Appendix M, Nos. 21 and 22.*) We were, however, struck with the comparatively small number of seamen from foreign-going ships in the Royal Naval Reserve, and we would recommend improved inducements and more active recruiting, which would doubtless result in an increase of this number.

20. But while on these two main points, we do not think that serious apprehension need be felt at the increase of foreigners; we are well aware that the question is not exhausted by these observations.

21. It would be impossible not to feel great regret if we thought that foreigners are driving out British subjects and compelling them to join the ranks of the unemployed. We do not think that this is so to any material extent. It is very difficult to ascertain precisely the facts, although we have taken great pains to do so. Many authorities (especially the superintendents of the Board of Trade) believe that there are not enough capable British seamen to man the mercantile marine, and that for the competent British seaman no lack of employment exists. Other persons do not agree with this view. We think that the truth probably is that for good British seamen in the prime of life employment is seldom lacking; but that for those who are only imperfectly competent, or whose best days have past, the competition of the foreigner is a serious matter. We see no means by which such competition can be, even if it should be, prevented.

22. But there remains further the feeling of regret, not the less real, even if it be based on patriotic and even sentimental rather than on strictly economic grounds, that by a great increase in the number of foreign seamen in its mercantile marine the characteristics of the British as a sea-going race should gradually deteriorate. It is impossible to regard such a change with acquiescence or equanimity.

(ii.)

23. We consider, therefore, what, if anything, can be done to attract the British population to a seafaring life. First, can sea service be rendered more attractive? We are well aware that its hardships in many respects are unavoidable and irremovable, and we do not fail also to observe that to increase attractions to British subjects is to increase them in at least an equal degree to the foreigner. Still we think it is desirable to do what can be done to ameliorate the lot of the British sailor in order to induce young men to take to and remain at sea.

24. The most hopeful course relates to improved food and cooking. What is inaccurately known as the Board of Trade scale is usually, if not invariably, inserted in articles of agreement. In most cases it is not adhered to, except as a punishment or in answer to complaints. But we do not think it is sufficiently ample or varied. Various scales exist; one was framed by a committee appointed by the Shipping Federation in 1892, which it was proposed by the Merchant Seamen Provision Bill of 1893 should be made a statutory minimum scale; another has been drawn up by the Seamen's Union, and two competent witnesses—Mr. William Service and Miss Effie Bell—were good enough to submit scales which would, in their opinion, be satisfactory. (*Appendix P, Nos. 1-8.*) We have considered these scales, and a sub-committee of our members has, after careful consideration, drawn up the scale which is printed as an appendix to this report.

25. We think that this scale should take the place of the present conventional scale which has hitherto been inserted in articles of agreement.

26. We hope that this scale will without compulsion thus become universal, and, at least until it has appeared that such a hope is ill-founded, we do not think that it should be enforced by legislation.

27. Cooking is a matter to which many competent witnesses before us have attached the utmost importance, and which we have no doubt in many cases, at present, falls far short of a standard that might be reached.

28. We recommend that after a lapse, say, of three years a certificate should be given by the Board of Trade, based on the certificate of competent schools of cookery, to persons desirous of acting as cooks, and that a qualified cook should be carried by every foreign-going vessel of 1,000 tons gross register and over, such qualification consisting of either such a certificate as is above mentioned or the possession of certificates of service for two years.

29. The inspection of ships' provisions by the Board of Trade is, we believe, excellent and efficacious as far as it goes. But we think that it might with advantage be extended by giving to the Board of Trade power in any case in which they think fit to inspect provisions, as to their quality, in the case of all vessels whose probable voyage exceeds twenty-one days' duration.

30. We have had before us a good deal of evidence with regard to the accommodation afforded to sailors and firemen on board ship—evidence of a varying and even conflicting character. It seems clear that such accommodation has improved in recent years, and is much better in the newer classes of vessels. Nor have many complaints been made of accommodation in larger vessels and the liners. We think that in matters such as the provision of proper stoves, the provision of tables for meals, or even a separate place for meals, it would be a wise step on the part of all shipowners to see that their ships are as well furnished, as in many cases they undoubtedly are. But we do not think that legislative action is called for; we do not desire to express any difference of opinion from the Royal Commission on Labour as to an increase of the space, although on this point few complaints came before us.

31. As regards medical attention, we think that it would be advantageous if masters and officers of vessels were allowed voluntarily to offer themselves for examination, and to receive certificates, in the elements of medical knowledge. Further than this we do not think it necessary or practicable to go. The evidence before us does not show that any strong feeling exists among sailors as to the want of medical attention, and with the aid of the book supplied to them and a proper supply of medical stores, masters succeed well in dealing with the ordinary cases of illness or accident.

32. From the point of view both of the safety of ships and of the comfort of the British seamen employed, we think that it would be of great advantage if an adequate knowledge of English in foreign seamen serving in British ships could be secured, and we recommend that after a certain period (say three years) the local superintendent of the Board of Trade should be empowered to forbid any foreign seaman to be shipped on a British ship unless he possess a knowledge of the English language sufficient for the understanding of orders; but we think that any such provision should not apply to Lascars or other Asiatics or Africans.

33. On the whole, we believe the system of continuous discharge certificates to be founded on a sound principle and to be productive of excellent results. But there is reason to think that, in some instances, a seaman who receives a "decline to report" as regards character believes himself to be the object of injustice. We feel considerable difficulty in suggesting any appropriate remedy. If the refusal to report be based on some definite charge, it would be comparatively easy to meet the justice of the case by allowing a reference in the nature of an appeal to some constituted authority. But in many, probably the great majority of cases, the refusal proceeds not on any definite charge, but on the belief of the master that the seaman's conduct as a whole does not deserve commendation. In such a case, to give a reference to any authority would probably be to expose to a criticism possibly incompetent, necessarily imperfectly informed, a discretion which it is essential should be freely and fearlessly exercised, and might tend to encourage in masters what at present probably only too often exists, a good-natured or indifferent tolerance of misconduct or incompetence. On the whole, however, we are inclined to think that there might with safety be given a reference by way of appeal to the local superintendent of the Board of Trade in all cases in which the master gives a bad character or "declines to report." We believe that the superintendent would in most

cases feel too much confidence in the master's decision to allow him to set it aside, but we think that in some cases, probably very few, a fair hearing would result in the seaman's receiving the character to which he thought he was entitled, or at least relieve his sense of injustice.

84. We think it most desirable that shipowners should instruct their captains not to employ seamen who cannot produce continuous discharge certificates, and we venture to express a hope that they will pursue this course.

(iii.)

85. We regard both failure to join and desertion as serious evils, and as often causing inferior seamen and foreigners to be shipped at the last moment in order to meet a pressing emergency.

86. We feel that it is impossible to revive the former law inflicting summary punishment by way of imprisonment for failure to join, but we think it most desirable that, short of imprisonment, the most effective possible remedy should be applied, and we recommend that in a proved case of wilful failure to join the Board of Trade should be empowered to withhold the seaman's continuous discharge certificate for such period as might appear just.

87. As regards desertion, we can look for a remedy mainly in the improved condition of seamen. There is no doubt that in some foreign ports, notably in San Francisco, as to which we have had clear and valuable evidence, desertion is encouraged not only by the prospect of higher wages or profitable employment on shore, but also by the direct action of crimps. We see no way in which the nefarious proceedings of these persons can be prevented, except by stringent administration of the American law and perhaps by some amendment of that law, and we do not feel ourselves competent to recommend what, if any, steps could be taken to achieve such results.

88. As regards discipline generally, we do not think that any alteration in the existing law as to offences and their penalties is necessary.

(iv.)

89. We think that an increase in the number of British seamen in the mercantile marine may be looked for rather in the improvement of their conditions than in the increase of facilities for training boys for the sea. At the same time, we think that the system of such ships as the *Indefatigable* deserves every commendation and such assistance as can properly be given. We think that the efforts of shipowners might be profitably devoted, as to a considerable extent they are at present, to the support and extension of the system of training-ships. It is a difficulty connected with such ships that the boys trained in them do not invariably take to or remain in the merchant service, and we think that a keen interest taken in them by shipowners would be the most hopeful means of ensuring such training as would be practically useful, and also of ensuring the employment of boys on leaving the training-ship.

40. We have received interesting evidence from representatives of the Navy League on the advantage of connecting the training of boys for the sea with the county councils as a branch of technical education, but we greatly doubt if such education would do much to provide a supply of ordinary seamen.

41. We think, however, that there is a better prospect of obtaining an increase of British seamen by means of the employment of boy sailors than by means of training-ships, and we recommend shipowners to take boys of good character on their ships with a view to their becoming seamen. Steps in this direction have been taken by the Shipping Federation, and we should be glad if their efforts are continued and extended. We believe that there

is a large supply of boys willing to go to sea if effective means for their doing so can be provided.

42. The system recently introduced of allowing an abatement of light dues in consideration of the employment of non-premium apprentices or boy sailors appears to us to have worked fairly well. We find that from April 1, 1899, to Sept. 30, 1902, 1,864 boys have been enrolled in the probationer class of the Royal Naval Reserve under this scheme (*Appendix M, No. 16*). But we cannot think that we can look with any degree of confidence to greatly increased numbers as a result of an extension of the present abatement.

48. For convenience, we summarise our principal recommendations as follows :

(1) The employment of a properly certificated cook on every foreign-going vessel of 1,000 tons gross register and over.

(2) The extension of the present system of inspection of ships' provisions by power being given to the Board of Trade to inspect, in any case in which they think fit, the provisions of any vessel whose probable voyage exceeds twenty-one days' duration.

(3) Power to be given to superintendents to forbid the engagement of any foreign seaman who does not possess a knowledge of the English language sufficient for the understanding of orders.

(4) Power to be given to the Board of Trade to withhold the continuous discharge certificate of any seaman who wilfully fails to join a vessel after signing articles.

(5) Efforts to be made to increase the numbers of the Royal Naval Reserve, especially of stokers, on foreign-going vessels by improved inducements and more active recruiting.

(6) A reference by way of appeal to a superintendent to be allowed to seamen in cases in which the master gives a bad character on discharge, or "declines to report."

(7) Facilities to be given to foreign seamen who have served for four years on British merchant ships to become, by an easy process, without expense, British subjects by naturalisation.

(8) The establishment of a system of voluntary examinations and certification of masters and officers in the elements of medical knowledge.

(9) The universal adoption in British ships of the scale of provisions recommended in this report.

(10) The provision of as comfortable living quarters as can practically be given to seamen on board ship.

(11) Every encouragement to be given to training-ships and to the training of boys on merchant vessels with the object of increasing the number of British seamen in the mercantile marine.

We think that the first four of these recommendations will require legislation, and that effect could be given to the succeeding recommendations without any change in the law.

We desire to express our most grateful thanks to the secretary for his invaluable services to us.

We have the honour to be, Sir,

(Signed)

F. H. JEUNE, Chairman.
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H. ACTON BLAKE.
THOS. BURT.
ALFRED J. G. CHALMERS.

Your obedient Servants,

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May 7, 1903.

G. E. BAKER, *Secretary*.

